ARIZONA

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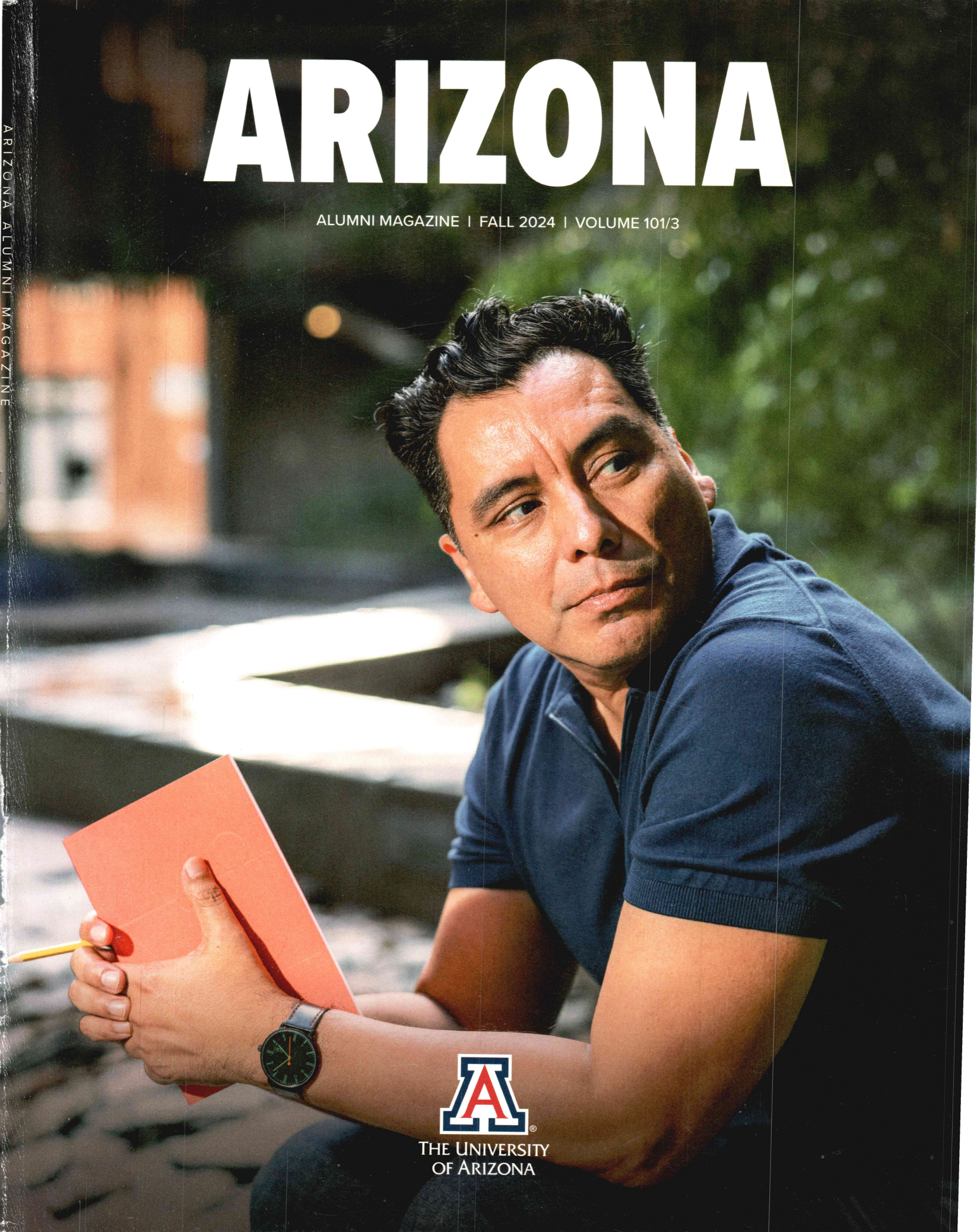

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

ARIZONA ALUMNI MAGAZINE

UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We respectfully acknowledge the University of Arizona is on the land and territories of Indigenous peoples. Today, Arizona is home to 22 federally recognized tribes, with Tucson being home to the O'odham and the Yaqui. Committed to diversity and inclusion, the university strives to build sustainable relationships with sovereign Native Nations and Indigenous communities through education offerings, partnerships and community service.

Aravaipa Canyon
Photo: Chris Richards

CONTENTS

Departments

2 Leadership
6 News Updates
10 Alumni Spotlight
12 In the Community
14 Campus Gem
18 Program Spotlight
20 Our Story
30 Rare Finds
42 Faculty Spotlight
46 Going Global
50 Alumni-Donor Spotlight
52 Sports
62 Class Notes
66 Wildcat Journey
68 Reflection

Cover Story

16
'HONOR YOUR PROCESS' WITH MANUEL MUÑOZ

There was a time not long ago that author and U of A professor Manuel Muñoz wondered if he'd keep writing at all. Now, as a 2023 recipient of the MacArthur Fellowship — sometimes called the "genius grant" — he's working on maintaining his practice while also exploring what newfound exposure might mean. / Photo: Courtesy of MacArthur Foundation

Features

22
LOUIS CARLOS BERNAL: RETROSPECTIVA

Starting in the late 1970s, the photographer Louis Carlos Bernal documented some of Tucson and Southern Arizona's more overlooked — but quietly extraordinary — scenes, particularly of Mexican American domestic life. Now, the Center for Creative Photography hosts a retrospective long overdue. / Photo: see credit on Page 22.

32
PRECISION HEALTH CARE

Big things are happening at University of Arizona Health Sciences. From new ways to look at pain and addiction to a visionary center for integrative medicine and the public-private partnerships of the Center for Advanced Molecular and Immunological Therapies, the U of A is once again reimagining how it handles health.

ARIZONA
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Executive Office of the President
Robert C. Robbins, president

John-Paul Roczniak, vice president, University of Arizona Philanthropy and Alumni Engagement program (PAE), and chief development officer, president and CEO, University of Arizona Foundation

PRODUCTION
Arizona Alumni Magazine is produced by the Office of Marketing and Communications in PAE.

Andrea Miller, senior vice president, constituent relations, campaign, and marketing and communications

Liz Warren-Pederson '11, associate vice president, marketing and communications

ARIZONA ALUMNI MAGAZINE STAFF
Cory Aaland '13, creative director
Johnathan Alexander '27, writer
Sarah Beaudry, editor and writer
Riley Beck '09, writer
Andreá Brooks '02, senior graphic designer
Ford Burkhart '63, contributing editor
Elizabeth Holaday '99, contributing editor
Jess Jenkins '14, online editor
Zoe Montaño '25, writer
Matthew Morris '21, writer
Mike Powell '12, editor and writer
Chris Richards, photographer
Kim Stoll '14, departments editor and writer

The University of Arizona
Philanthropy and Alumni Engagement program
1111 N. Cherry Ave., Tucson, AZ 85721
Telephone: 520-621-7576 | 800-232-8278
alumni.arizona.edu

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
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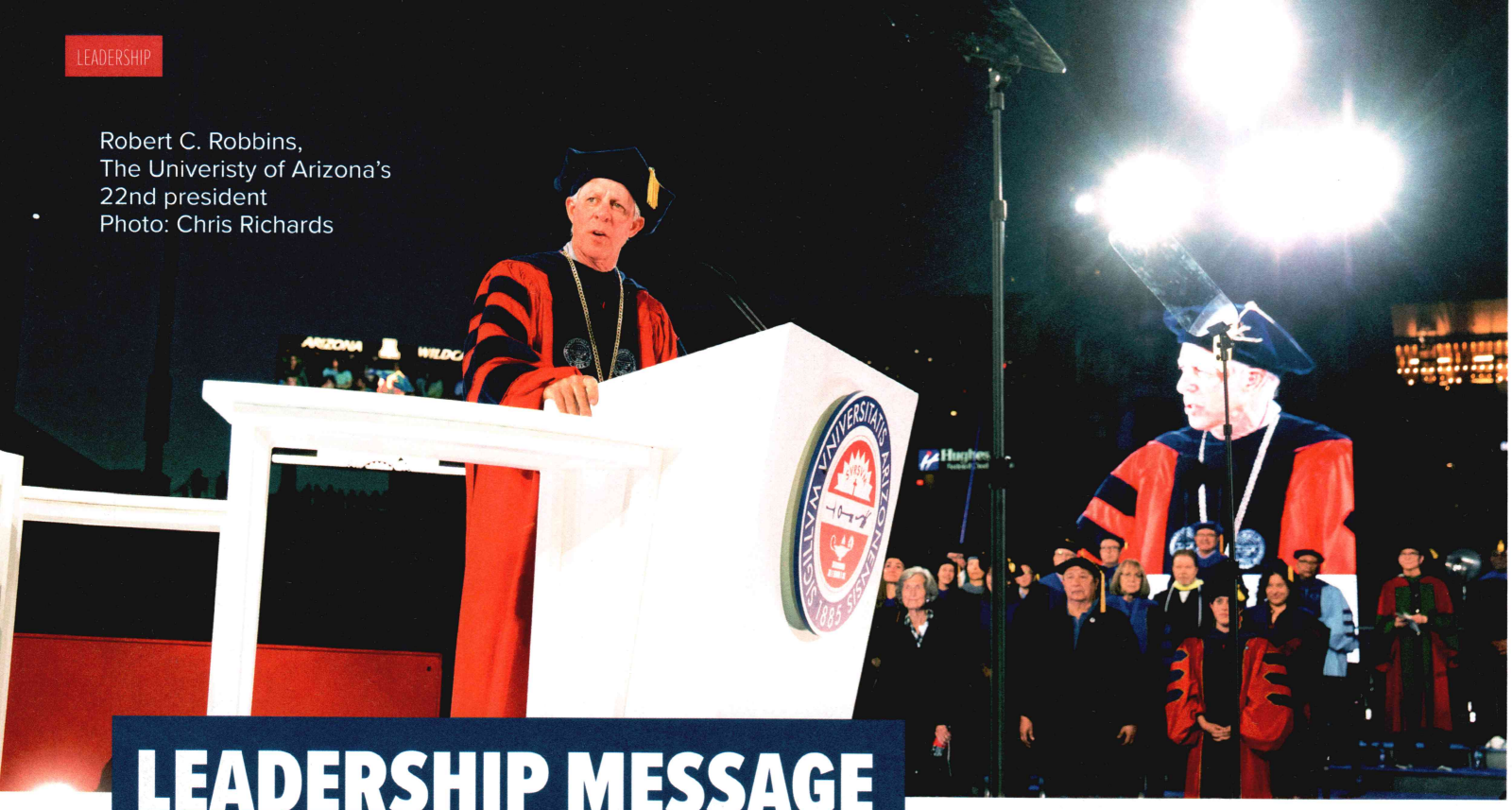


Robert C. Robbins,
The Univeristy of Arizona's
22nd president
Photo: Chris Richards

LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

Dear Wildcats,

I feel immense gratitude to have served as University of Arizona president over the past seven years, and continue to take pride in this community and all it accomplishes.

I have truly enjoyed working with the faculty, staff and students of this incredible university, as well as with its alumni and donors. And I am grateful to the Arizona Board of Regents and so many others for their guidance in working toward the goal of advancing what the U of A can do.

We have accomplished so much together. We have strengthened valuable partnerships with leaders across the city, county and state, and advanced both our tribal engagement and community connections.

We increased research activity and impact by leaps and bounds, and supported that research with new infrastructure in the forms of the Grand Challenges Building and the Applied Research Building to help sustain growth. We also launched the Center for Advanced Molecular and Immunological Therapies, which will revolutionize medical care and patient outcomes, as well as bolster the U of A's presence in the Phoenix Bioscience Core.

We have seen tremendous philanthropic support, including three colleges being named in honor of donors deeply invested in the university's success. We completed multiyear efforts to launch a Student Success District unlike any in the country and to secure designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution — initiatives that have benefitted students greatly.

We secured a bright future for Arizona Athletics in the midst of conference realignment. And we showed the world how to Bear Down during a global pandemic, emerging more determined than ever to have a positive impact on the lives of everyone in our Wildcat community.

We've also weathered our fair share of challenges. I remain grateful to the dedicated teams working to improve the university's long-term financial position and have complete confidence that we are on the right path. As many of you have likely seen, the Arizona Board of Regents has selected a new president, Suresh Garimella, a respected scholar who I am confident will take this already great institution to exciting new places.

I remain inspired by our faculty's dedication to the pursuit of knowledge that has real, global impact; the ambitions of our students to follow their dreams and improve the world around them; and by the shared belief of our alumni and donors in the transformative power of higher education.

Thank you for the past seven years, and Bear Down!

Robert C. Robbins

Robert C. Robbins, M.D.
President
The University of Arizona

GRAND CHALLENGES BUILDING

The Grand Challenges Research Building, completed in the spring with the support of donor funding, connects to the Meinel Optical Sciences Building located on Cherry Avenue between East University Boulevard and East Fourth Street on the University of Arizona Mall.

The building initiative was integral to the strategic plan led by President Robert C. Robbins during his tenure. “This building will help us expand our interdisciplinary research capacity in areas such as optics, quantum computing, advanced communications and biomedical technologies,” Robbins said during the building’s groundbreaking ceremony in 2021.

A matching gift initiative by James C. Wyant resulted in $28 million in donations and commitments to establish 14 new endowed chairs in optical sciences in 2022, solidifying the U of A’s optical sciences program as a leader in optics education and research.

Photo: Chris Richards

Suresh Garimella and Arizona Daily Wildcat reporter Kanishka Chinnaraj Photo: Chris Richards

MOVING FORWARD

The U of A welcomes new president Suresh Garimella.
By Alexis Blue

On Aug. 9, the Arizona Board of Regents voted unanimously to appoint Suresh Garimella as the 23rd president of the University of Arizona. Since 2019, Garimella has served as 27th president of the University of Vermont, which, like the University of Arizona, is a land-grant university.

"I certainty understand the responsibility — the awesome responsibility — of leading a land-grant university," he said. "To me, the primary thing that means is that we have to provide access to a world-class education to our students and make it as affordable and as accessible as possible."

As UVM president, Garimella prioritized access and affordability for students. The university froze tuition rates for all students during his five years, while attracting record numbers of undergraduate applications and enrolling the most diverse and talented students in the university's history.

"Throughout my career, I think you'll see I've had one mission as my primary driving force, and that is to serve our students," Garimella said, adding that his focus on student success will be broadly visible.

A professor of mechanical engineering, Garimella continued to focus on teaching and mentoring students during his UVM presidency, annually leading an undergraduate seminar class in civil discourse and continuing to supervise doctoral students. In his career, he has mentored over 90 graduate students and 50 postdoctoral scholars, 29 of whom went on to accept prestigious faculty positions around the world.

The power of research

Garimella said that he is a deep believer in the "power and promise of research" and recognizes the U of A's position as a global research leader.

"We excel in research because of the shared efforts of our faculty, our staff and our graduate students, our postdocs and undergraduates, and so all are critical parts of this vibrant campus endeavor," he said. "I look forward to building strong relationships and partnerships across campus and around Arizona, because nothing that we work on together is beyond our reach."

During his time at UVM, Garimella doubled the university's research enterprise, achieving record funding levels in each of his five years.

Garimella himself is a highly cited researcher who has made significant contributions to the field of electronics thermal management and energy efficiency at micro-

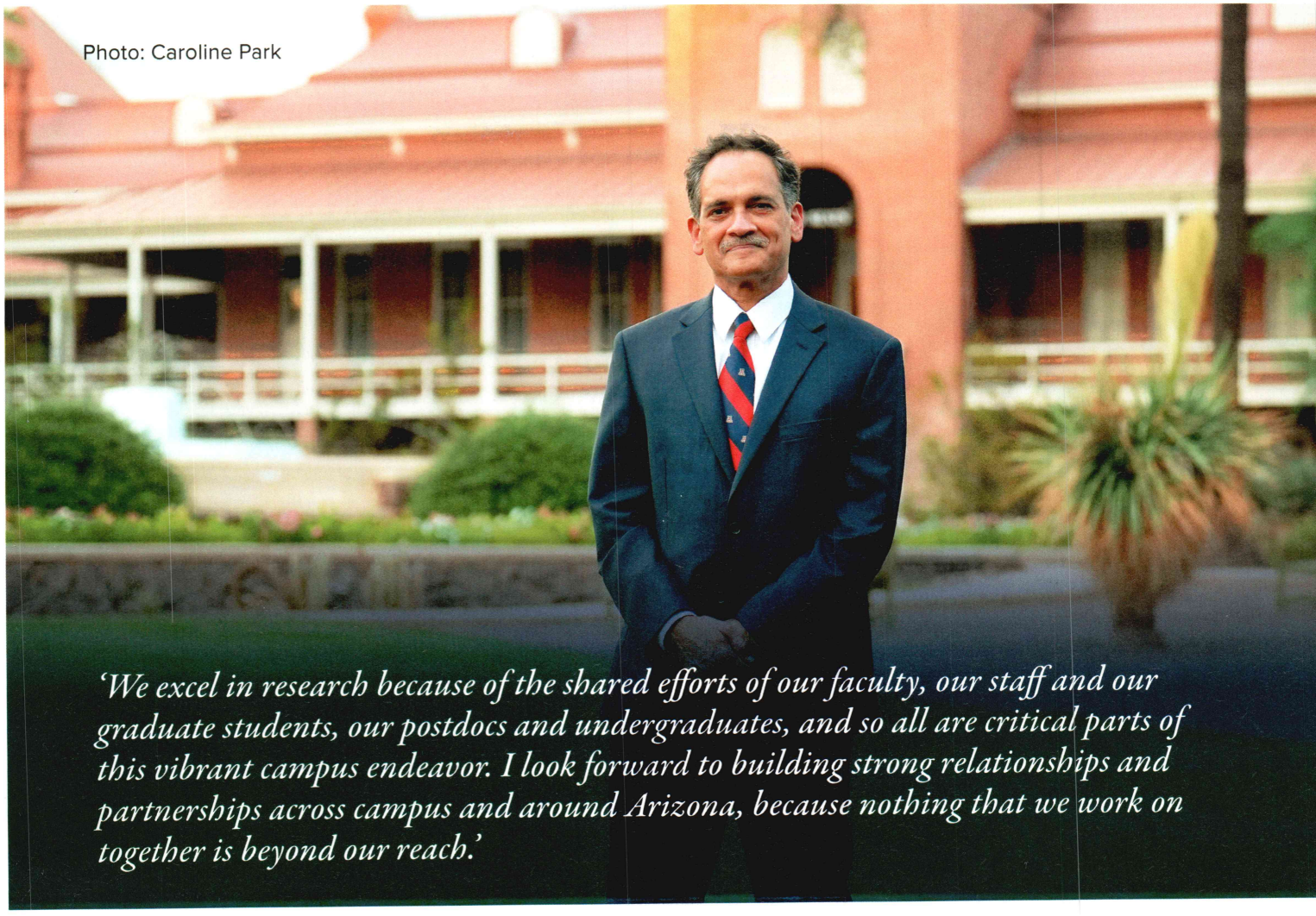


Photo: Caroline Park
'We excel in research because of the shared efforts of our faculty, our staff and our graduate students, our postdocs and undergraduates, and so all are critical parts of this vibrant campus endeavor. I look forward to building strong relationships and partnerships across campus and around Arizona, because nothing that we work on together is beyond our reach.'

and nanoscales, and in sustainable energy systems technology and policy. He has co-authored more than 625 research publications in peer-reviewed journals and has been issued 16 patents. He is a fellow of the National Academy of Inventors, the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Society of Mechanical Engineers.

Garimella has a doctorate from the University of California, Berkeley, a master's degree from The Ohio State University and a bachelor's degree from the Indian Institute of Technology Madras.

Prior to his time at UVM, Garimella was executive vice president for research and partnerships and a distinguished professor at Indiana's land-grant university, Purdue University, where he oversaw Purdue's Discovery Park, a set of facilities and institutes focused on global challenges related to health and life sciences, sustainability, food, energy, and defense and security.

Bringing people together

Garimella said his conversations with members of the U of A Presidential Search Advisory Committee sent a clear message: "It showed me there is great interest in moving forward and achieving big things, and it is hard not to get excited when the group has such big ambition. I thrive on institutional ambition, and so I truly thank everyone who brought us to this position."

He also said he hopes to bring a period of stability to the university, and he plans to build a team that works closely together, while seeking input from faculty, staff and student governance groups, as well as alumni, donors and the regents.

Garimella will succeed President Robert C. Robbins, who has led the university since 2017. Robbins drove significant improvement in student retention and success, oversaw an increase in annual research expenditures to $955 million and spearheaded the most successful fundraising campaign in the history of the U of A at nearly $2.3 billion. ◆

UNIVERSITY UPDATES

Photo: Chris RIchards

Hope for a Valley fever vaccine

Back in 2021, a study at the University of Arizona College of Medicine – Tucson showed that two doses of a vaccine candidate provided dogs with a high level of protection against a fungus that causes Valley fever. Now, new funding from the National Institutes of Health is helping researchers at the U of A get a little closer to adapting that vaccine to the humans who feed them.

Anivive Lifesciences, a U of A startup that exclusively licensed the treatment through Tech Launch Arizona, was recently awarded a contract by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, a division of the NIH, with first-year funding of $4.8 million and additional funding of up to $33 million. The funding, some of which will be earmarked for the U of A, will assist with the research, including the manufacturing, formulation, safety testing and support for a Phase 1 human clinical trial.

Dr. John Galgiani, for one, is thrilled. "Two-thirds of all U.S. infections occur in our state," he says. "There are more than 25 million people at risk of contracting Valley fever, and we do not yet have a vaccine to prevent it. The impact on this population is similar to that of polio before we had a vaccine. It's just that polio was a worldwide problem, whereas Valley fever risk exists in a relatively small geographic area."

A U of A professor of internal medicine as well as the director of the Valley Fever Center for Excellence, Galgiani has studied Valley fever for more than 40 years, with waxing concern. "California has added Valley fever as one of the human health metrics regarding the impact of climate change," he points out. "The greater awareness emerging now about this disease is what the Valley Fever Center for Excellence has been advocating for more than a quarter century."

It's too soon to celebrate, of course. But for someone who has put in as much time, energy and expertise as Galgiani, the funding represents a huge step in turning a rare but sometimes serious condition like Valley fever into something preventable. "The support of the NIH to progress the vaccine to humans is the peak of my career of more than 40 years as a researcher, physician and advocate dedicated to Valley fever awareness and solutions," Galgiani says.

U of A alumna receives Presidential Medal of Freedom

Jane Rigby '03 '06, an astrophysicist at the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center and the senior project scientist for the James Webb Space Telescope, has received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award in the United States.

Jane Rigby
Photo: NASA

President Joe Biden awarded her the honor for her role in the successful development of the James Webb Space Telescope and her dedication to diversity and inclusion in science.

Rigby earned her doctorate in astronomy from the University of Arizona.

Wildcat Gregory McNamee shares the U of A's history in 100 stories

In "The University of Arizona: A History in 100 Stories," Gregory McNamee '78 '80 guides readers through the university's evolution from a small land-grant school into an internationally renowned research institution. Drawing on his personal experiences as a student

and professional at the university, McNamee presents U of A's history through a hundred stories.

The book combines intellectual themes with lighthearted moments, from the origins of the university's rivalry with Arizona State to stories of lurking campus ghosts. Wildcats and history enthusiasts alike will enjoy the recounting of the university's people, places and achievements.

McNamee, a writer and editor, is a former lecturer at the U of A's Department of Economics and is a traveling speaker for Arizona Humanities. His writing and photographs have been featured in numerous magazines and online publications.

Researchers contribute to NASA's Artemis III mission

Artemis III, planned for 2026, is NASA's first mission to return astronauts to the moon's surface in over 50 years and the first human mission to the lunar south pole. Researchers at the U of A's Lunar and Planetary Laboratory have contributed to two of the three instruments NASA selected for lunar surface deployment.

These instruments will gather data on the lunar environment, lunar interior and human sustainability on the moon, supporting future exploration of Mars. Among the instruments are seismometers designed by Dani DellaGiustina, principal investigator, OSIRIS-APEX, and her team, to detect moonquakes and a Lunar Dielectric Analyzer, developed in collaboration with professor Erik Asphaug to explore the moon's subsurface.

"It is exciting to see a new generation of Lunar and Planetary Laboratory scientists build on our legacy of lunar exploration, dating back to even before Apollo," says Mark Marley, the Lunar and Planetary Laboratory director. "Our first major research program was to map the moon. Now we are helping send instruments to detect what lies beneath that surface."

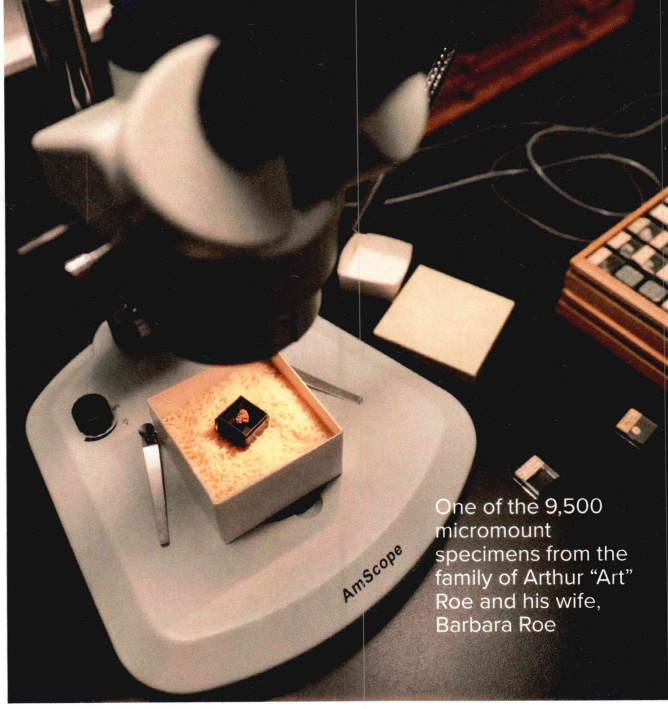
Crew of U of A artists completes simulated moon mission

Elizabeth George leaped into the air — and lingered. When her feet finally touched down, she pushed up again and spun three times before returning gently to Earth. Such ballon — a term in dance meaning light-footedness — would normally be impossible on Earth; her near-weightlessness was the product of engineering that allowed her to feel what it might be like to pirouette on the moon.

George and three other U of A artists served as crew members in a six-day simulated moon mission, called Imagination 1, within the Space Analog for the Moon and Mars, or SAM. SAM is a 1,100-square-foot pressurized and hermetically sealed facility on the university's Biosphere 2 campus. Each crew member also completed an extravehicular activity in which they donned pressure suits connected to the habitat to conduct simulated moon walks. The goal of their mission was to explore the value of art in space exploration and to produce creative works inspired by the limitations and possibilities of life beyond Earth.

The crew was led by Christopher Cokinos, a nonfiction writer and professor emeritus of English, and also included Julie Swarstad Johnson, a poet and Poetry Center archivist and librarian, and Ivy Wahome, a textile artist and master of fine arts candidate in costume design and production at the School of Theatre, Film & Television.

With the mission complete, the crew will continue to reflect, create, collaborate and engage with the public and the spaceflight community to demonstrate the transformative role the arts can play as humanity takes to the moon, Mars and beyond.



One of the 9,500 micromount specimens from the family of Arthur "Art" Roe and his wife, Barbara Roe

Alfie Norville Gem & Mineral Museum receives significant collection and commitment for $1.6 million endowment

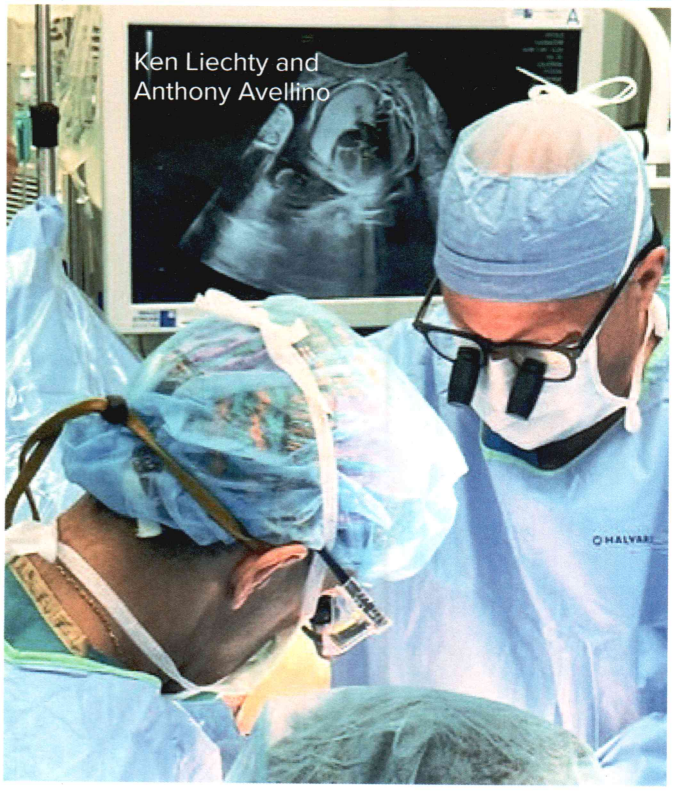
The University of Arizona's Alfie Norville Gem & Mineral Museum has been gifted a collection of over 9,500 micromount specimens and received a $1.6 million commitment to establish an endowment for conservation and education.

Micromounts are tiny mineral specimens mounted in half-inch boxes, using adhesives to keep them in near-flawless condition.

The gift and endowment were made by the family of the late Arthur "Art" Roe and his wife, Barbara Roe. A master micromounter, Art Roe began collecting minerals almost 90 years ago. In 1983, he was inducted into the Micromounters Hall of Fame.

"Not only is the collection remarkably well documented and organized, but it has verified examples of a wide range of localities, many of which are no longer available for specimen collection," says Violetta Wolf, director of the museum. "These gifts represent a giant leap forward for the museum's research mission, allowing us to expand our outreach and provide valuable, hands-on learning opportunities." ◆

Priscila Carranza Olea and Ramon



Ken Liechty and Anthony Avellino

SAVING RAMON

A novel spina bifida surgery succeeds.
By Ford Burkhart | Banner Health photos

With 10 weeks still to go before his birth, tiny Ramon took a short journey on the frontiers of fetal medicine. The procedure made history, and — more importantly — it worked.

Ramon briefly left his cozy home in his mother's abdomen for a high-tech, almost incredible, surgery on his spine. Some 40 doctors and other providers took part in or observed the procedure at Banner – University Medical Center Tucson and the University of Arizona. Chief surgeon Ken Liechty said it was like conducting an orchestra.

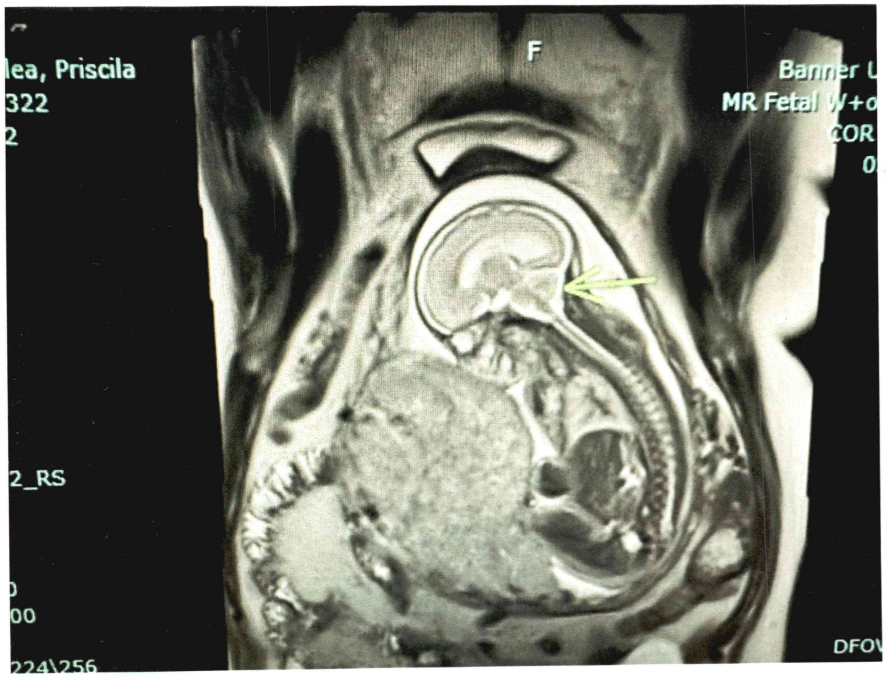
Ramon Alberto Contreras was diagnosed with spina bifida, which creates a debilitating gap in the spine. It can make walking, breathing, speech and even cognition difficult, often requiring living with a shunt tube to drain away brain fluids.

But the condition can now be treated with complex surgery on the fetus, still safely in utero. The uterus is carefully lifted outside the mother for the few hours of the procedure, but the fetus remains inside its protective sac.

That had never been done in Arizona. And the team of doctors from Banner – UMC Tucson and the U of A medical school set a new standard by creating a strong multidisciplinary team from fetal medicine, neurosurgery, nursing care and a dozen other areas. In charge was Ken Liechty, who had been recruited to Banner from the Children's Hospital Colorado Fetal Care Center after working in fetal medicine at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and elsewhere.

Liechty is a fetal and pediatric surgeon and director of fetal medicine at Banner – UMC as well as surgeon-in-chief at Banner Children's at Diamond Children's Medical Center.

At 5:30 a.m. on Feb. 19, Liechty and his fetal medicine team gathered in Operating Room 3 in Banner's Tower 1. They were ready at 7:30 a.m.



'His birth is a miracle. The baby is well, is very happy and content, as are we.'

In the Labor and Delivery unit, Ramon's mother was given medicines to prevent labor and transported to the operating room.

"The unusual thing is that we have two patients here." Liechty says. "We have to think about mom and the baby." As those in the in-utero field put it, they were "treating the patient within the patient."

At first Ramon was in the wrong position, Liechty says. "We had to move him around, with his head down and his back up.

"We made our incision to expose the uterus. It was like an orchestra that you are guiding. You have to make sure the anesthesia is doing its part. That the meds you need are working. The uterus can be very unforgiving, so you make sure it has good relaxation before you open it. And the whole time we are doing an ultrasound to monitor Ramon in utero.

"Under ultrasound guidance, we make sure the placenta and the cord are away from where we are getting into the uterus."

Through the two-inch incision in the uterus, the team placed a tube to add a saline solution to replace the amniotic fluid in which Ramon was floating.

"Then we give him a shot to give him pain relief and make sure his heart rate stays up," Liechty says.

Next came "the neurosurgical piece," Liechty continues. They dropped the cord back into the spinal canal and closed the gap in the spinal column.

After two hours of surgery, Ramon was ready to be returned to his mother's abdomen. In a few days, his mother, Priscila Carranza Olea, and her husband, Ramon Alberto Contreras Armenta, were discharged to the Ronald McDonald House for 10 weeks until Ramon's scheduled birth.

Ramon's surgery was a landmark for the new fetal team at the U of A and Banner – UMC Tucson.

The new faces in pediatric neurosurgery include Anthony Avellino, now director of pediatric neurosurgery at Banner.

Another key player was Truc-Anh Nguyen, a Banner fetal anesthesiologist. "That's a unique type of anesthesia," she says, "to put mom to sleep with a baby while we're going to be operating on her uterus."

By repairing the spine in utero, Liechty says, "That really changed the outcome for these babies, so they don't need a tube, called a ventriculoperitoneal shunt, to drain excess fluid from the brain to the abdomen. Such a tube can get clogged. It can get infected. Patients can have complications from the placement, including bleeding in the brain."

If you have spina bifida, Liechty says, your risk of needing a shunt is about 90 percent. With fetal surgery, that risk drops to about 45 percent.

For Ramon, he adds, the risk went down to about 25 percent. "That's a dramatic impact for his life, not needing a shunt," Liechty says.

Ramon, who was born on April 23, will be twice as likely to be able to walk independently after having the spinal defect repaired in utero, Liechty says. "Hopefully, no braces. Nothing."

After Ramon arrived, his mother said, "His birth is a miracle. The baby is well, is very happy and content, as are we."

As a young resident doctor, Liechty had been part of the team in the 1990s that developed the first fetal surgery at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. He has done more than 100 such surgeries in Colorado.

Liechty came to Arizona for "an opportunity to impact change," he says. "That's what drives me in medicine." ◆

Jessica Cox

TO THE HORIZON

Jessica Cox flies with her feet. By Ford Burkhart | Jessica Cox Motivational Services photos

As a toddler, Jessica Cox '05 dreamed of flying. Today, the University of Arizona graduate, born without arms, is a celebrity pilot who has been invited to 29 countries to talk about her journey.

Cox tours the globe as a keynote speaker and disability advocate, promoting ways to mentor children facing challenges like hers.

'We want the students to get involved in social innovation, using their skills as engineers to make the world a better place in terms of inclusion and diversity. ... This project will show the world that disability doesn't mean inability.'

"My goal to fly started as a kid on the swings," she told attendees at a recent reception to honor winners of the Wildcat Heroes Award. "I wanted to do whatever other kids can do."

She has achieved that, and much more.

Cox says her research suggests she is the first licensed armless pilot ever to successfully fly an airplane using only her feet.

And now she is working with students and faculty from the University of Arizona College of Engineering to design what she calls the Impossible Airplane. The project is part of a senior-level interdisciplinary capstone project, researching innovations for pilots who will fly using only their feet. For the students, it's a required class, Engineering 498. Their goal is to design components for an all-new airplane to better meet Jessica's needs. An assembly site in New Jersey is expected to have a prototype ready for test flight by 2025.

"We want the students to get involved in social innovation, using their skills as engineers to make the world a better place in terms of inclusion and diversity," Cox says. "This project will show the world that disability doesn't mean inability."

Up to now, Cox has been flying a small aircraft called the ERCO Erocoupe, a single-engine, 85-horsepower craft with simple controls that appeal to pilots with disabilities. But Cox has ideas for an all-new aircraft that pilots without arms could fly more safely and efficiently. The Impossible Airplane, a larger, four-seater Van's Aircraft RV-10, will be the result, incorporating Cox's design suggestions.

David Margolis is both a U of A hand surgeon and professor of orthopedic surgery and a pilot who is advising the College of Engineering team. "Jessica is actually one of my heroes," he says. "She's an example of how a person with devastating injury to their hands can still do everything in life. She's an inspiration."

Cox graduated with a major in psychology and a minor in communications. Over the next three years, she became a certified pilot. Now, she is the executive director of Rightfooted Foundation, a nonprofit she created to promote mentorship and inspire children with limb differences and their families.

Her nonprofit also provides tools to help armless persons all over the world achieve independence in daily routines like dressing, one of the hardest tasks they face. One tool uses a hook attached to a suction cup to hold pants while a person wiggles in or out.

Cox practiced taekwondo and earned a black belt — and married her instructor, Patrick Chamberlain, who now is the director of her professional speaking business. Now, Rightfooted Foundation offers a new curriculum for that martial art to better include participants without arms.

Never one to settle for the status quo, Cox has recently taken up golf, modifying the clubs to meet her needs and to help others without arms enter the sport. She's driven, she says, by the impact of her efforts to do ordinary tasks.

One day when she was putting gas in her car, a man came up to her with tears rolling down his cheeks. He asked her to look over at the next gas pump, where his daughter was watching. An accident had left her without several of her fingers, and she had said she was inspired to see Cox carrying out such a difficult task without arms.

"It gave her hope," Cox says. "That's part of the mission I chose. To lift people up, to give people hope." ◆

Diane Thompson and Carolee Stewart

THE (SECOND) HAPPIEST PLACE ON EARTH

ArtWorks connects adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities to the university community.
By Zoe Montaño | Chris Richards photos

There isn't an empty spot in the studio. The walls are vibrant with colorful mosaics and adorned with whimsical papier-mâché animals. The strains of upbeat music, the sight of artists diligently glazing pottery and the earthy scent of clay make it impossible to not want to create.

In his usual spot in the corner, Brad Biddlecome works alongside his student worker. She leans over him, mesmerized by the detailed landscape he's sketched with colored pencils. The two exchange a few sentences as Biddlecome shares his inspiration for the drawing.

Biddlecome doesn't say much with words, but his infectious smile and meticulous drawings tell you everything you need to know. He is a gifted artist, a fan of University of Arizona sports — and one of the studio's most beloved fixtures.

Biddlecome is known around the studio for his intricate landscapes and use of abstraction, but he finds the most joy in drawing faces.

"I made it for a GymCat," he says, showing off a colorful drawing of a member of the gymnastics team. "My dad buys season tickets."

His enthusiasm is contagious as he shares stories about his past projects, from a red clay lamb with blue eyes sitting on his desk to a portrait-based art show in collaboration with the Arizona School of Art titled "Face2Face."

Since 2010, Biddlecome has been attending daily classes at ArtWorks, an outreach program for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, housed in the Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities at the Department of Family and Community Medicine. As a devoted fan of the painter and longtime PBS host Bob Ross, Biddlecome has always had a passion for art, but it was here that his experience as a creator blossomed.

Biddlecome and about 20 other artists have been commissioned to create projects across Arizona through the ArtWorks program, most recently for the Arizona

Jon Green

Anthony Lane

Abigail Love

Caregiver Coalition and the College of Medicine – Tucson.

ArtWorks also hosts pop-up sales, and Biddlecome is always there to advertise them. "It's all for sale!" he smiles, pointing at art and rubbing his fingertips together to indicate cash. This past Valentine's Day, artists sold handcrafted magnets, pins and cards on campus.

Yumi Shirai, Ph.D., '99 '06 '11, the director of ArtWorks, has a goal of supporting a holistic environment that focuses on both the creative expression and personal development of adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Shirai has a deep connection to the ArtWorks community, which served as a second family to her when she first came to the United States as an international student.

"If we only focus on the productivity of being adults, it can be very limiting," Shirai says. "I think that creative expression can really provide us with opportunities. For individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, they can be aware of their talent beyond their cognitive level or communication skills."

But ArtWorks isn't just for the artists. Medical students, art majors, student-athletes and even Wilma Wildcat frequent the studio to create, make friends and learn valuable skills.

In the Student Field Laboratory, U of A students get hands-on experiences outside of their classroom and clinical settings, developing practical skills in working with adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Shirai believes that these early positive interactions are crucial, especially for aspiring medical students who may not encounter diverse populations until far into their career.

"Providing the space for students is very important. By having ArtWorks in the academic community, they can be advocates," Shirai says.

It's ArtWorks' dedication to fostering empathy and learning that truly makes it special. As instructional specialist and program coordinator Elizabeth Vargas describes it, ArtWorks is "the happiest place on Earth."

An artist named Cody pipes up: "Except for Disneyland."

Interested in supporting ArtWorks? Keep up to date with pop-up sales through Instagram @artworksua and Facebook @ArtWorksUA. ◆

Cameron Kramer uses a Vandercook proving machine to work on their final project.

ARTISTRY IN PRINT

The Book Art and Letterpress Lab creates new stories with old techniques.
By Zoe Montaño | Chris Richards photos

Since the 15th century, the letterpress has been used to produce printed materials from chapter books to movie posters. Although now overshadowed by more time-efficient methods, the process of selecting type, finding the perfect paper and experiencing the finished project remains immensely rewarding, says Karen Zimmermann, associate director and professor at the University of Arizona School of Art.

"Many people find it meditative," says Zimmermann, as a Vandercook press hums in the background, delicately transferring a light blue coat of ink to paper. The letterpress is a form of relief printing, where the desired text or image is raised and transfers ink to paper when printed. At the Book Art and Letterpress Lab, students are using this technology to express themselves and tell stories artistically.

"It's a combination of teaching people about letterpress technology and using the book as a creative medium," Zimmermann explains. "We're encompassing a space where people can create projects that are talking about issues that they are researching, passionate about and want to share with others."

The lab specializes in book arts, in which students combine traditional methods like letterpress and bookbinding with new technologies like RISO printing, which is a combination of photocopying and stencil duplication processes, as well as digital and laser engraving. Students have used lab resources to create community zines, which are small booklets focusing on local issues, personal stories or niche interests.

Sela Margalit, a junior majoring in studio art, is taking the course "Letterpress and the Multiple." For her final project, she wanted to share her love of music.

While digging through the many drawers of type, Margalit discovered Turista Gorda NF, a font she recognized from singer Lana Del Rey's 2023 album

'It's a combination of teaching people about letterpress technology and using the book as a creative medium. ... We're encompassing a space where people can create projects that are talking about issues that they are researching, passionate about and want to share with others.'

Professor Lisa Watanabe gives direction to student Scooter Curran on the Vandercook SP15.

"Did You Know That There's a Tunnel Under Ocean Blvd." The album's cover pays homage to the cover of the soundtrack to the 1966 Natalie Wood movie "This Property is Condemned."

"I really liked the union of vintage and modern styles. I use engravings, which are basically stuff that was donated from old newspapers, advertisements and photographs," Margalit says. "I love bringing old lost things to new art, because I'm basically re-exposing people to cool ideas."

Visitors to the lab will find more than just art students at work. Open to the university community, the lab also attracts graduate students from the creative writing program who collaborate to print poems and stories. Zimmermann recalls an honors student from the nutritional sciences department who created a multilayer print depicting the digestive tract for her studies.

"I very much enjoyed the community that existed in the lab," says John Gialanella '12, who has a master's in fine arts from the U of A. "It was always exciting to share that space with so many people, all coming to the book arts and letterpress studio for very similar and very different reasons."

Gialanella has put what he learned in the lab to good use as an assistant professor of print production in Western Washington University's design department.

"For many of us, we grew up hitting Command-P on the keyboard, and that was the extent of our printing experience. Before the computer, someone had to hand-set each and every letter, period and space that needed to be printed. A press operator had to keep a machine running, inked and fed with paper," Gialanella says.

"Understanding the amount of craft, time and energy needed to do something that today is so trivial was an awesome experience for me." ◆

Manuel Muñoz at the U of A Environment and Natural Resources 2 Building
Photo: Courtesy of MacArthur Foundation

'HONOR YOUR PROCESS'

The author and MacArthur Fellow Manuel Muñoz reflects on writing and community. By Riley Beck

Short-story writer and novelist Manuel Muñoz teaches creative writing at the University of Arizona. His stories focus on the lives of Mexican American communities in the Central Valley of California where he grew up, sometimes working the annual grape harvest. Muñoz earned a bachelor's degree from Harvard University, where he was a first-generation student, and a master of fine arts from Cornell University. His frequently anthologized work has appeared in publications such as The New York Times and Best American Short Fiction.

In addition to three O. Henry Awards and a Whiting Award, Muñoz has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts as well as the New York Foundation for the Arts. In 2023, he was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship, also known as the "genius grant." At that time, he remarked, "The short stories I write are proof to the world that we are as complex and complicated as art demands and that our lives belong in works of art." He was kind enough to sit down with us and discuss writing, the literary world and how it feels to be a MacArthur fellow.

'Celebrate success when it comes, embrace it and be proud of it, but don't focus on the outcome of your process.'

Q: What supports your writing?

A: That has been changing over time. I'm often watching a movie from the Criterion Collection or indulging in a horror movie or something campy just to keep my mind on story. In the mornings, I'll usually read a short story or chapter of a novel. I kind of walk around my kitchen, holding up the book. And it gives me a little chance to meditate. These latest practices have been about thinking small and not overwhelming myself.

Q: Could you describe a time you felt discouraged about your writing and how you handled it?

A: I had a very long period between books where I had lost my publisher and I wasn't sure if I wanted to keep writing. I had to come to terms with the fact that I was putting too much worth on what publishing books meant to my identity as a writer as opposed to what I had always been taught as a student, which is honor your process. And [that helped me] no longer feel the pressure of answering to anybody but myself, but it took a while to get there. I mean, 11 years between books is a long time.

Q: Is there something you consistently tell your students and aspiring writers about writing or publishing?

A: Don't engage in any kind of comparison, not to mention competition, with other people, because no work is like your own. Celebrate success when it comes, embrace it and be proud of it, but don't focus on the outcome of your process. My mentor, Helena María Viramontes, gave me the best advice I've ever received, and I didn't think it was good at the time. She said to me, "No one is waiting for it," which sounds harsh, but it's also very liberating. Just work on it, finish it, mold it the way you want before you think [about publication].

Q: What surprised you most when you were writing your most recent book, "The Consequences"?

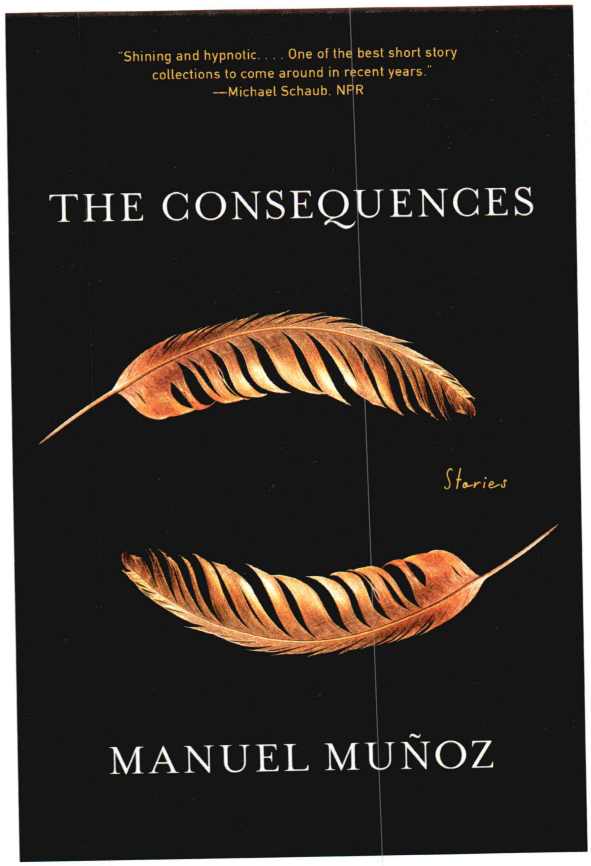
A: That it was a book at all. Honestly. I was just writing stories, not trying to put together a collection, but it came together because of an Italian publisher. Sara Reggiani, the editor of Edizioni Black Coffee, encountered a story of mine while translating an issue of Freeman's journal, got in touch with my agent and sent a contract. I appreciated her interest and thought, "Wouldn't it be great to publish in Italian as a commentary on what U.S. publishing does to writers in my community?"

Q: How do you define your community, and what does the U.S. do to writers in your community?

A: Publishing is difficult for everybody. Let me just start by saying that. However, some communities have historically struggled to gain a foothold in the U.S. publishing industry. The Mexican American community along the West Coast, Southwest and Texas, for example. For a long time, the understood route for us was to go to a small press with a first book and then go to the "Big Five" — there needed to be proof of audience. This is true even of writers that we now think of as giants — Sandra Cisneros, Helena Viramontes, Luis Alberto Urrea. Publishing has since seemed to wake up, but you need infrastructure — you need editors and publicists and marketers to do the work and be on the same page, which often doesn't happen.

Q: How has the MacArthur "genius grant" impacted you?

A: It's been an overwhelming experience. The past couple of months have been transformative, and maybe in ways that I'm not entirely comfortable with yet, so I'm still sorting that out. One of my students congratulated me and I said, "This couldn't have happened to a more retreating person." I just want to do my work. I'm not used to it, and I'm not sure I'm going to get used to it. I don't know what's going to happen down the road because of it in terms of visibility for Mexican American writers. We'll see. ◆


"Shining and hypnotic. . . . One of the best short story collections to come around in recent years."
—Michael Schaub, NPR
THE CONSEQUENCES
Stories
MANUEL MUÑOZ

Ofelia Zepeda and Andrew McNair
Photo: Andrew T. Bourland

SPEAKING TO COMMUNITY

A master's program is revitalizing Native American languages. By Lori Harwood

Kickapoo was the first language of Mosiah Bluecloud '20, an enrolled member of the Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma. Bluecloud received his master's degree in Native American languages and linguistics from the University of Arizona and is now pursuing his doctorate in linguistics at the university with a focus on revitalizing the Shawnee and Kickapoo languages.

Bluecloud says he "eats, breathes and prays" in his native language. "I believe that language is the glue that holds communities together by connecting past, present and future culture caretakers. Language provides access to identity and ways of being," he says.

Bluecloud credits the university's Native American Languages and Linguistics master's program, also known as NAMA, with helping him find his voice in academia. The program, housed in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, trains students in linguistics, language documentation and language revitalization. It also

aims to broaden the participation of Native American students in language sciences and in graduate school.

Regents Professor of Linguistics Ofelia Zepeda, who co-founded NAMA, says the program advances the objectives of the UNESCO International Decade of Indigenous Languages, or IDIL: the period between 2022 and 2032 established by the United Nations General Assembly to draw global attention to Indigenous languages and the need for their preservation.

One area that Indigenous language communities can focus on during IDIL is access, says Zepeda, who also represents the United States on UNESCO's IDIL task force. "Training Indigenous people in the field of linguistics is one of the best ways to enable access to research and early documentation of their language."

Documenting and revitalizing Native American languages

Founded in 1999, NAMA was innovative for its time, Zepeda says.

"Its immediate goal was to provide basic linguistic training to speakers of Indigenous languages so that these individuals could return to their communities and build on the different types of language work that either they or their language programs or their tribes were engaged in," she says. It is bolstered by a strong U of A linguistics Ph.D. program and collaboration with the university's American Indian Language Development Institute, or AILDI, which Zepeda directs. AILDI also houses the new federally funded West Region Native American Language Resource Center.

The NAMA program has expanded its student diversity over the years, says Wilson de Lima Silva, director of NAMA and associate professor in the Department of Linguistics.

"Originally, students were often fluent in their native languages," de Lima Silva says. "In the last decade, however, NAMA has been serving Native students who may not be fluent in their language, but they come into the program as part of their goal to learn and reclaim their Native languages — and often to pursue a doctorate in linguistics."

Rosalia Badhorse '23, from the Northern Cheyenne Tribe of Montana, grew up casually hearing the Cheyenne language but wasn't explicitly taught it because of the political, economic and sociocultural pressures to speak English, she says. She earned a bachelor's degree in business administration; but when her grandfather, a Cheyenne speaker, passed away, "that's when it really hit me that I needed to do more with my language and culture," she says.

Badhorse joined the NAMA program to study the Cheyenne language and now is a Cheyenne language instructor at Chief Dull Knife College in Montana.

"I still have a long way to go, but my fluency is further along because of NAMA, and I'm just so excited that I get to share this with others," Badhorse says. "My language, like many other Native American languages, is considered an endangered language. ... I am a million times grateful to the University of Arizona and the NAMA program for having a space for me to learn the fundamental tools for addressing a need in my community."

NAMA also accepts students from Indigenous language communities in Central and South America as well as non-Native students who have been involved in Indigenous language revitalization work.

"Admitting students from these various groups allows us to provide training in language revitalization to far more people, who can then apply this knowledge around the world to help improve the health of Indigenous languages," de Lima Silva says.

The program has also adapted its curriculum to serve students interested in computational approaches to language revitalization and documentation, with some students taking courses in the department's Human Language Technology program.

NAMA graduate and linguistics doctoral student Zion Smith '24 is a Chickasaw Nation citizen working on Chickasaw language revitalization and Native American language typology.

"Native American languages can benefit greatly from advancements in computational linguistics," Smith says. "For example, our tribe has a large number of recordings waiting for manual analysis. If this process can be automated to some degree, which is something we are working on, it would save a lot of time."

Increasing Native American representation in graduate school

NAMA often serves as a stepping stone for Indigenous students to advance to doctoral programs in linguistics or other disciplines, de Lima Silva says — an important role given the underrepresentation of Indigenous people among doctoral degree holders.

Over the past 25 years, the program has graduated 34 students, 21 of which went on to pursue doctoral degrees in various disciplines, including linguistics, education, anthropology and child development. All but three NAMA graduates have been members of Indigenous communities. The program currently admits three or four students each year.

"When I attend national conferences, I'm often surprised that people know that NAMA is one of the leading programs helping to bring more Native American scholars into the field of linguistics," de Lima Silva says.

Jeremy Johns '19, who grew up on the Ak-Chin Indian Community in Southern Arizona, received his NAMA degree and now is a linguistics doctoral candidate at Yale University.

"There's a common assumption that culture and language are somehow separable. For us as O'odham, they exist within each other," Johns says. "I'm very interested in coupling the fields of academic linguistic research and community-based language revitalization efforts to ensure the survival of this endangered language." ◆

Corey Roberts
Photo: Chris
Richards

MIMAHUK IKANQSA

'We are all only one': Linguist Corey Roberts is working to save his ancestral language.
By Matthew Morris

Linguist Corey Roberts '24 remembers a day in Senegal when he watched four children playing. The children, he says, each spoke their own language — one using Wolof, and the others, Serer, Pulaar and Lebou. They spoke to one another and listened, Roberts says, and "they all understood each other. They felt no need to change language."

"That," he says, "is the human capacity for language. And that was what Native America was before colonization happened."

The English language, Roberts notes, sitting in what was then his graduate-student office at the University of Arizona, contains more than a million words. But when he ran across a dissertation on the language of his ancestors, Tutelo — called Yesa:sahį́ ("the speech of the people") by many of its speakers — he counted only 753.

Yesa:sahį́, he knew, had many more. And he is unearthing them.

Roberts, who will complete his linguistics doctorate in December, is of mixed ancestry. With family members, he's carried out thorough genealogical research. Some of his predecessors, he says, were Tuscarora, others African, still others British. Not until his father's funeral did he find out from a cousin that, through a grandmother, he also is Occaneechi.

The Occaneechi, a Native American tribe of the North Carolina and Virginia Piedmont, once spoke Yesa:sahį́. Roberts' mission now is to ensure that the language is spoken again — by children and their parents, at powwows, in prayer and in daily life.

"The state of my language," he says, "is such that I'm going to have to work on this for the rest of my life, and even then, I won't get to do all the things that I would like to see happen."

A language, Roberts is careful to note, is rarely "extinct." Linguists who labor to recover languages — like Roberts; like his best friend in the U of A linguistics department, the last speaker of a Manchurian language — hold a measured distaste for the word.

"As long as there are people alive that have descendancy, as long as there's any will to learn the language," Roberts says, "a language is not extinct. It might be dormant; it might be sleeping; it might be revitalizing. But not extinct."

Of course, languages do sometimes fall away. The last speaker of Ofo with tribal descendancy, Roberts says, passed away in 1914. Ofo is one of the two closest sister languages to Yesa:sahį́, the other being Biloxi. Each is among the Siouan language family's 21 tongues. And The New York Times in 2017 told the story of Amadeo García García, the last living speaker of Taushiro, the language of a tribe that had escaped the ravages of colonization by fleeing into the Peruvian Amazon.

'When you start giving [a] community the tools that it needs to start having access to its language again, you see those gaps start filling up. ... And it's beautiful.'

Once, an elder asked him to share the tribe's creation story. At first, Roberts thought it might be a test of his cultural knowledge. As he shared the story, however, he understood that this cultural information was largely unavailable, and the elder was helping to fill in gaps. That moment was a revelation for Roberts: his language goals began to carry the added task of cultural revitalization.

Language and culture, Roberts says, are interwoven, fused. The loss of language is the communal loss of access to pieces of culture. "There is this ancestral sense of loss, even if it is not consciously or palpably known — and that loss is intergenerational," he says. "It's about intergenerational trauma. That loss carries," expressed in heightened rates of depression and suicide.

But the obverse also is true: To recapture language is to recapture well-being. Language, for Roberts, is a vehicle for better physical and mental health for individuals and communities.

"When you start giving [a] community the tools that it needs to start having access to its language again, you see those gaps start filling up," he says. "And it's beautiful."

During his doctoral work, Roberts offered a monthly Yesa:sahį́ class to members of the Occaneechi tribe. He paused the lessons to write his dissertation on the language, but he means to begin sharing his accrued knowledge again.

Roberts speaks seven languages: English, Portuguese, Spanish, French, Russian, Wolof and Yesa:sahį́, in order of fluency. A love of languages, he says, is a theme of his life, alongside a love of ancestry. In high school, he dropped his American classmates so that he could hang out with the Spanish exchange students. He has studied in Brazil, Russia and Senegal — places, he says, where English was not primary.

In Brazil, he studied capoeira, a mixed practice: part dance, part martial art. In Senegal, he took courses in theater pedagogy. But he was swimming in language in those places, just as he is now.

Yesa:sahį́, he says, is agglutinative, like many Native languages of North America. Word pieces are melded together, bit by bit, to build phrases and full sentences, sometimes in a single word. "You think of 'gluten' — glue sticks together," he says. "So, all these word parts stick together." What might take three words to communicate in English — "I eat it," for instance — is expressed in a single word.

In his language, then, as in his life: a fusion, a mosaic. Parts that build a whole.

More than anything, Roberts' Yesa:sahį́ students sometimes say, they'd like to speak to their ancestors when they die. And "I'm going to do my best to have at least some of what we say be understood on the other side," he says.

"Knowing that that is now a possibility," he adds, "brings about a level of spiritual health the likes of which we hadn't had access to in a long time."

Roberts recently made a worldly crossing over of his own, accepting a professorship at Elon University, which sits on the Occaneechi's North Carolina ancestral lands. The university, he says, has "a great, great relationship with my tribe, and they are working to build it." Roberts has been tasked with starting a program in Native American and Indigenous studies — a program that will focus on its relationship with his people.

To study a language like Yesa:sahį́, Roberts told another school in a job interview, is to learn not only about Siouan languages, but also about languages like Japanese, which have a subject-object-verb word order (think: "I cookies eat"), rather than the subject-verb-object order of English. "It's also," he says, "to learn something about history." He says that many places in the U.S. take their names from Siouan languages and peoples: Kansas, Iowa and Missouri. Osage County, Biloxi and Omaha.

To study Yesa:sahį́, then, becomes a journey across space and time — a journey of parts pieced together, not unlike Roberts' own.

"Studying my language in the way that you have to makes you examine language in a way that you would never do otherwise," he says. "And it helps to enrich your understanding of Language, capital 'l,' as a concept, as opposed to a particular language, lowercase 'l.'"

Roberts knows that his won't be the final word on Yesa:sahį́, just as the dissertation he ran across was by no means the end. From the beginning, he's just wanted to be a part of the whole.

"I said, 'Well, I might as well do what I can to help work on this language and give back to the communities,'" he recollects. "And that's kind of been motivating me ever since." ◆

Below: Louis Carlos Bernal, 4th Street Barrio, Douglas, 1979, Center for Creative Photography, the University of Arizona: Louis Carlos Bernal Archive. © Lisa Bernal Brethour and Katrina Ann Bernal.

Louis Carlos Bernal: Retrospectiva

An exhibition at the Center for Creative Photography showcases scenes from Mexican American life by one of Tucson's greatest artists, Sept. 14-March 15, 2025.
By Margaret Regan

The story has been told often. On a day in 1977, the artist Louis Carlos Bernal went out for a walk in Tucson's Barrio Viejo. As always, he had a camera in hand. The neighborhood of corner grocery stores and rows of modest houses had once been the thriving hub of the city's Mexican American district. But it had gotten a lot smaller 10 years earlier, when the city destroyed some 263 buildings and pushed more than 300 families out.

As he walked, he found a house with its front door slightly open. He called out to see if anyone was home and then peeked in. All he could see was layers of dust on the furniture. Realizing that no one was living there anymore, he came back the next day, eager to take pictures.

On a dresser, he found a glorious collage of objects: a statue of the Infant Jesus of Prague, a picture of Pope Pius XII and dried flowers in a Folgers coffee jar. He took a photo, now called "Pope Pius XII." Another, "Ahora," captured a pile of handwritten notes in Spanish, some with prayers, some a short list of groceries. In their midst was an image of a victorious St. Michael in the throes of destroying the devil. In "Calendario," a canopy of cloth drapes from the ceiling with a painted Jesus looking down lovingly above a simple folding bed.

Bernal eventually tracked down an old woman who had lived there, Mary Benitez. "I went to see her and showed her the

photographs that I had done of this house," Bernal remembered some years later. "And she was very excited. ... She gave me permission to do the photographs."

These marvelous photos were given the name "Benitez Suite." Seven of these works are included in the first large retrospective of his life's work, the "Louis Carlos Bernal: Retrospectiva" at the Center for Creative Photography. Thanks to Bernal's daughters, Lisa Bernal Brethour and Katrina Bernal, the CCP is the permanent home for much of his archive. These loving pictures are among 125 photographs in the exhibit that record the life of Mexican American communities at the end of the last century.

Elizabeth Ferrer, curator of the exhibition and a specialist in the history of Latinx photography, is the author of the show's companion publication, "Louis Carlos Bernal: Monografía," to be co-published by CCP and Aperture. She believes that Bernal experienced "an

Left: Louis Carlos Bernal, Calendario, 1977, Center for Creative Photography, the University of Arizona: Louis Carlos Bernal Archive. © Lisa Bernal Brethour and Katrina Ann Bernal.

Below: Louis Carlos Bernal, Cholos, Logan Heights, San Diego, 1980, Center for Creative Photography, the University of Arizona: Louis Carlos Bernal Archive. © Lisa Bernal Brethour and Katrina Ann Bernal.

apotheosis of sorts" when capturing the images of the Benitez Suite. "What he saw in the barrio changed him."

In an interview with Arizona Illustrated in 1982, Bernal himself said, "I was looking for an identity in images. And this is what I found, only it was lusher, much richer and more intense than I ever anticipated it would be. ... And as a photographer and as a Chicano, I feel I have an obligation to my community to photograph and reproduce images that deal with the culture."

Bernal first took to photography when he was 11, after an aunt gave him a camera. After that, he never was without one. He went to college at Arizona State University and eventually earned a master of fine arts there. He also studied with Frederick Sommer, an internationally known photographer based in Prescott whose archive also is at the CCP. In 1972, Bernal landed a coveted teaching job at Pima Community College. He loved it and worked there for the rest of his life.

Despite his successes, Bernal struggled financially. A breakthrough came in 1977, the year that he made the Benitez Suite. He was invited to contribute to "Espejo: Reflections of the Mexican American," a touring show funded by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund. Ferrer points out that the support enabled Bernal to work in color much more than he had before. Until then, most of his photographs had been in black and white.

His work began to be shown around the country and, eventually, in Mexico.

The next year, he returned to his childhood home of Douglas, Arizona, to take photographs in the homes of relatives and friends. One of his most famous photos from that time, "Dos Mujeres, Douglas, Arizona" shows two young women sitting in adjacent rooms. Both are looking directly at Bernal. The living room is painted a rich blue-green; the nearby bedroom is painted a vivid pink. The girl in the foreground is doing needlework, while the other is combing her hair. Golden southwest light pours through a window, illuminating each of their beautiful faces.

In another Douglas color photo, "Barrio Portrait, H Avenue Cuadra," three children stand outside a red brick home on a chilly winter day, their young parents watching adoringly from the front door. Two trees, stripped of their leaves, frame the portrait. The colors are chestnut brown and autumnal tan and red. The children stare directly at the camera, looking shy but curious.

Over the next decade, Bernal created several series of photographs of hard-working people in barrios elsewhere in the southwest. In Lubbock, Texas, he took a striking black-and-white portrait of a baker, José Padilla, called "Panadero." Padilla stands surrounded by his pastries — pan dulce, garra de oso, empanadas —

Louis Carlos Bernal, Martinez Brothers in Candy Store, Douglas, Arizona, 1978, Center for Creative Photography, the University of Arizona: Gift of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund. © Lisa Bernal Brethour and Katrina Ann Bernal.

'I was looking for an identity in images. And this is what I found, only it was lusher, much richer and more intense than I ever anticipated it would be. ... And as a photographer and as a Chicano, I feel I have an obligation to my community to photograph and reproduce images that deal with the culture.'

Louis Carlos Bernal, El Gato, Canutillo, New Mexico, 1979, Center for Creative Photography, the University of Arizona: Louis Carlos Bernal Archive. © Lisa Bernal Brethour and Katrina Ann Bernal.

looking exhausted. In an untitled photo from Lubbock, an older couple stand in a yard of zinnias and prickly pear, holding a basket of fresh-picked fruit.

In the early 1980s, Bernal also went to Mexico multiple times. As a young man, he had studied Spanish in Mexico City. He had his beloved camera with him, and, in 1962, he exhibited photographs there for the first time. In one of these early pictures, "Chiclets, Cuernavaca," a charming barefoot boy stands with a smile and a box of Chiclets to sell to passersby. It's the earliest of Bernal's photographs in the CCP show.

In 1981, Bernal was invited to show some of his work and participate in the Segundo Coloquio Latinamericano de Fotografía, an international conference held in the grand Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City. Ferrer says, "He developed a wide circle of friends who were then Mexico's leading photographers," including Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Lola Álvarez

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Above: Louis Carlos Bernal, Dos Mujeres, Douglas, Arizona, 1978, Center for Creative Photography, the University of Arizona: Louis Carlos Bernal Archive. © Lisa Bernal Brethour and Katrina Ann Bernal.

Top Right: Louis Carlos Bernal, La Pelona, Mexico, 1980, Center for Creative Photography, the University of Arizona: Louis Carlos Bernal Archive. © Lisa Bernal Brethour and Katrina Ann Bernal.

Bottom Right: Louis Carlos Bernal, Untitled, 1987, Center for Creative Photography, the University of Arizona: Louis Carlos Bernal Archive. © Lisa Bernal Brethour and Katrina Ann Bernal.

Bravo and Graciela Iturbide, all three of whom also have collections at CCP.

"He was respected by them," Ferrer writes, "and treated as an equal. This was not the case in the U.S., where he felt marginalized."

Nonetheless, he was very busy in those years. He had a group exhibition in Germany, workshops in several cities including Havana, Cuba, and group shows in California, and, of all things, was invited by the Los Angeles Olympic Committee and took photos behind the scenes.

It all came to a stop on Aug. 21, 1989. Bernal was hit by a car as he was riding his bike to work at Pima. He was left in a coma and never recovered. Four years later, he died on Aug. 18, 1993, at age 52.

His good friend and colleague at Pima, Ann Simmons-Myers has been devoted to keeping his work in the public eye. "Retrospectiva" is the happy culmination of her partnership with the CCP and Bernal's daughters, long awaited by his many friends and admirers.

Thank you to the Henry Luce Foundation for support of this exhibition. ◆

Unknown, Dr. John P. Schaefer and Ansel Adams at opening exhibition of the CCP, 1975, AG 1. Center for Creative Photography archive, the University of Arizona, Tucson

BIG VISION

A look at John Schaefer's multifaceted legacy. By Mike Powell

When then-University of Arizona President John Schaefer approached Ansel Adams about housing Adams' archives at the U of A, he wasn't just indulging an interest in photography — he was seeing an opportunity. Schools like Harvard and Yale had their world-class libraries; they also had a couple hundred years' head start on building them. But with a few exceptions — including the Ransom Center at the University of Texas, Austin — no major university had come to recognize the power and significance of photography either as an art form or as a means of historical documentation.

This was 1974. Schaefer was just shy of 40 — the second-youngest president in the university's history. Within a year, the Center for Creative Photography was born, and with it, the growing sense of the U of A as a place where exceptional things might happen.

"Photos really changed history," Schaefer says, reflecting on the eve of the center's 50th anniversary. "Child labor laws disappeared because of photographs at the turn of the century of 8-year-old kids working on machines and getting hurt. We became sensitized to immigration issues with the photographs of Jacob Riis on the Bowery at the turn of the last century. The war in Vietnam ended because of photography. I believe people got sick and tired of seeing pictures of what was going on there, day after day, night after night."

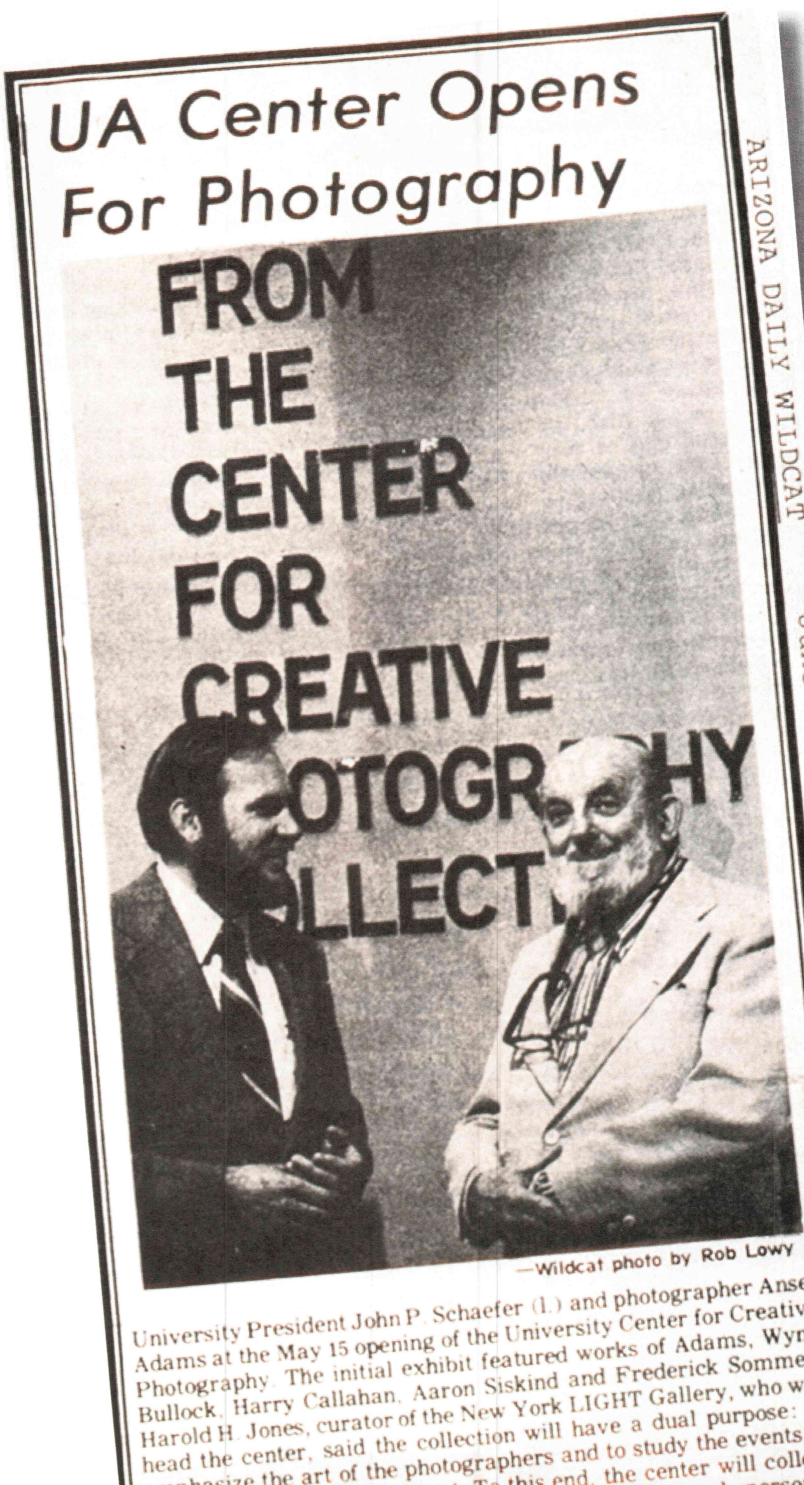
The CCP is only one facet of Schaefer's legacy. A former chemistry professor, he helped the university in its push to secure its designation as a Research 1 institution and gave early and crucial support to projects like the Mirror Lab, then a hodgepodge of scientists housed in some unused space under the football stadium but soon to be a major force in optical science and telescope design.

"Arizona suffered from the fact that although we had a good astronomy department, we had no real large telescope to compete," he says. U of A optical sciences center founder Aden Meinel had the then-radical idea to arrange a group of six smaller mirrors hexagonally to make the equivalent of a single large one.

Schaefer remembers approaching the National Science Foundation for funding and getting shot down on the grounds that it wouldn't work. "That turned out to be wrong," he says, matter-of-factly but with a smile. "We turned out to be right. And that became the paradigm for every large telescope that's been built since."

He also maintained a healthy photographic practice of his own, including images of the Mission San Xavier del Bac published in Arizona Highways in the late '70s and a small collection kept at the CCP. "When I became an administrator, I decided I really needed an outside interest to stop from going crazy," he says. That was more than 50 years ago. He published his most recent book — "Desert Jewels," a collection of cactus flowers — in 2023, at the age of 88.

Of all his achievements, Schaefer has said that few have made him as proud as getting the university to buy into the idea that it could be as good as any school in the country. Talking to the U of A's Archive Tucson project in 2017, he said, "For a long time, I think one of the real challenges at Arizona was that we didn't realize how good we were." ◆


UA Center Opens For Photography

FROM THE CENTER FOR CREATIVE OTOGR HY LLECT

ARIZONA DAILY WILDCAT

—Wildcat photo by Rob Lowy

University President John P. Schaefer (l.) and photographer Anse Adams at the May 15 opening of the University Center for Creativ Photography. The initial exhibit featured works of Adams, Wyn Bullock, Harry Callahan, Aaron Siskind and Frederick Somme Harold H. Jones, curator of the New York LIGHT Gallery, who w head the center, said the collection will have a dual purpose: emphasize the art of the photographers and to study the events

CAMI Rendering, Courtesy of McCarthy + SmithGroup (rendering for illustrative purposes only)

Precision Health Care

At the University of Arizona Health Sciences, researchers and physician-scientists are designing and developing precision treatments for all populations. At the Comprehensive Center for Pain & Addiction, they are reimagining and transforming health care for chronic pain and substance use disorder by advancing science to provide students, educators, professionals, leaders and communities with evidence-based insights, therapies and resources. At the U of A Cancer Center, they are building the only state registry and database of melanoma and nonmelanoma skin cancer to better assess the full burden of these diseases. And at the Center for Advanced Molecular and Immunological Therapies (CAMI), they are forming alliances with academic, professional and industry organizations to accelerate progress in the development and commercialization of personalized therapies for cancer, autoimmune conditions and infectious diseases while advancing the field of immune monitoring and profiling.

CAMI Rendering

CAMI Set to Transform Immunotherapy Field

By Stacy Pigott

The Center for Advanced Molecular and Immunological Therapies will support research to catalyze the next generation of precision health care treatments.

Researchers and physician-scientists are increasingly using precision medicine to develop new cell- and gene-based therapeutic options for diseases, building on the idea that the most effective defense against health issues is the body's natural immune system.

CAMI is being developed to advance knowledge of the immunology of cancers, infectious diseases and autoimmune conditions to develop novel strategies for the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of diseases.

Deepta Bhattacharya, a professor at the University of Arizona College of Medicine – Tucson's Department of Immunobiology, is the inaugural executive director of CAMI. He played an integral role in the development of CAMI after serving on the CAMI Advisory Council, a group of leaders of science, government and private industry from across Arizona. He began in this role July 1. Read more about Bhattacharya on Page 36.

"There is not a field with more explosive growth than immunotherapy. There is rapid growth in research investment and increased formation of academic and industry partnerships around the world," says Michael D. Dake, senior vice president for University of Arizona Health Sciences. "My hopes are that CAMI is going to provide opportunities to accelerate the development and delivery of revolutionary treatments for the management of cancer, autoimmune and infectious diseases."

Changing the way doctors treat disease

Immunotherapy is one of the most promising approaches to cancer treatment, as it has the potential to sidestep the effects of therapies that can compromise patients' long-term health and wellness. But cancer isn't the only target researchers, including bioengineer Michael Kuhns, have in their sights.

"Bioengineers solve fundamental problems with technologies that can have many applications," says Kuhns, a professor at the College of Medicine – Tucson and a member of the BIO5 Institute. "If you can make something run more efficiently in certain circumstances — for example, make T cells in the immune system more effective at combating a particular disease — then the only limit to immunotherapy is your imagination."

Kuhns' research focuses on engineering chimeric antigen receptors, or CARs, a relatively new type of gene therapy. He built a biomimetic five-module chimeric antigen receptor, or 5MCAR, to direct killer T cells to target and destroy autoimmune T cells. When tested in a diabetic mouse model, the 5MCAR T cells recognized and destroyed pathogenic T cells, effectively preventing Type 1 diabetes.

"This technology has clear implications for autoimmune disease, but also for cancer," says Kuhns, who serves on the 21-member CAMI Advisory Council. "This technology emerged from basic science, is taking hold in the laboratory and is showing promise to go to the clinic. This is a prime example of what we can do."

CAMI will build on U of A Health Sciences' expertise in basic science, translational medicine and investigator-initiated clinical trials to advance immunotherapy research in four areas: cancer, infectious diseases, autoimmune diseases and real-time immune system monitoring.

The scope of work CAMI will do has already drawn the support of state and Maricopa County leaders, as well as private donors.

- The Phoenix City Council approved approximately $20 million in funding for CAMI.
- Former Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey designated $150 million for CAMI.
- A $3 million gift from Bruce and Patricia Bartlett created the George A. Vanderheiden Endowed Chair in Cancer Immunological Research at CAMI.
- The Steele Foundation's $10 million gift to the University of Arizona to create the Daniel Cracchiolo Institute for Pediatric Autoimmune Disease Research at the Steele Children's Research Center includes $2 million in support of CAMI.
- The Maricopa County Board of Supervisors designated $4 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds to support CAMI and the research that will be done to prevent and treat diseases such as long COVID.

Developed in partnership between the SmithGroup design firm and McCarthy construction company, the 200,000-square-foot CAMI building will help solidify the Phoenix Bioscience Core as a leading center for cell and gene therapy research, startup activity and corporate engagement. It will also serve to anchor the district as a hub for partnering institutions throughout Arizona, including Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, the Mayo Clinic and the Translational Genomics Research Institute, among others. ◆

Deepta Bhattacharya
Photo: Kris Hanning

Beyond Basic Research

Meet Deepta Bhattacharya, the inaugural executive director of CAMI. By Mike Powell

Deepta Bhattacharya remembers the mouse that humbled him. An ordinary mouse, in most respects, save a single missing gene. And Bhattacharya was going to figure out what that missing gene meant.

This was early in his days as a professor of pathology and immunology at Washington University in St. Louis. He was hot to trot, eager to impress. So he has this mouse with the missing gene, and immediately he can see the differences between it and a normally functioning mouse.

"All these differences that no one had ever reported before," he says — differences pertaining to immune function and inflammation; differences that had real potential for application downstream. "It's like, 'yes, jackpot,' right?"

But the further Bhattacharya and his colleagues got into their research, the less apparent the results became. "It turned out there was another mutation in the mouse no one knew about," he says. "And it turned out that all these things we were finding [were] because of the other gene, not the gene that we thought we were studying." Like that, Bhattacharya's daydream of the early-career scientist quickly and miraculously discovering insights previously unseen — vanished.

"I think the longer you stay in this field, the more humble you get, because you just accumulate all of these instances where you were sure that you were right, but then you do the experiment and it's obvious you're wrong," he says. "And I think that's one of the things that makes it so much fun, because you can't be sure, and it's actually always — almost always — worth it to do that basic experiment."

In a way, it was Bhattacharya's uncertainty — or at least his comfort with the exploratory nature of it — that led him to immunology in the first place. Born at the University Medical Center here at the U of A and raised on the city's east side ("I remember the monsoons," he says), he moved to Indiana after his father took a job teaching math at Indiana University in Bloomington, where Bhattacharya later went to college.

Initially, he was going to be a chemistry major, but a quirk in the department's language requirements — they would only accept French, German or Russian, but Bhattacharya had studied Spanish — led him to biochemistry instead. "Requirements weren't dramatically different, but obviously it required taking at least molecular biology, genetics, a couple of other things," he says. "And I thought, 'You know? I kind of like this better.'"

He ended up in a doctoral program at the University of California, Berkeley that allowed him to study aspects of both chemistry and biology. Immunology — the study of how our bodies use their own resources to defend against infection and disease — made an impression on him because it seemed like the path from lab research to real-life treatment was relatively quick. "That you can explore your basic curiosity," as he put it, "but anything you find has a fairly short route to the clinic."

Even then, though, Bhattacharya noticed the way the conventions of academia could be limiting, or at least foreshorten the horizon of how work could be applied. "The term is a little overused, but it's called the Valley of Death," he says. Research is done; discoveries are made. But academics aren't evaluated on their ability to develop therapies, they're evaluated on their ability to publish papers and procure grants. So they do that instead. "And a lot of great discoveries just die."

It took the coronavirus pandemic to show him what it might be like to work outside the bubble. He was back in Tucson now, a professor in the Immunobiology department at the College of Medicine – Tucson, suddenly drafted into helping the university come up with a response to a problem no one fully understood.

"What many of us realized at that point is that we didn't have any training in public communication at all," he says. "At the beginning, I think I was pretty bad, to be honest." Then came a suggestion from his wife: Why don't you just say what you think? "And I was like, OK, I'm just going to do that."

Lines of communication opened up. Suddenly he was meeting with liaisons from state government and the Office of General Counsel — people who scientists like Bhattacharya don't ordinarily bump into. "When you recognize that you're not just trying to jockey for credit on paper, but that the things you're doing have real implications for how safe people will be on campus, how the university is going to manage this crisis, it enforces a different mindset," he says.

That promise of real implications is something Bhattacharya is hoping to convey in his new role as executive direct of the Center for Advanced Molecular and Immunological Therapies, or CAMI.

"I've been involved in some degree of drug development at this point, and that almost always goes through startup companies," he says. In other words, the lab over here, and the business over there. Part of his vision with CAMI is to bridge the gap between the two such that scientists have clearer paths — not to mention better incentives — for getting their work into the world, where it can make an impact on patients' lives.

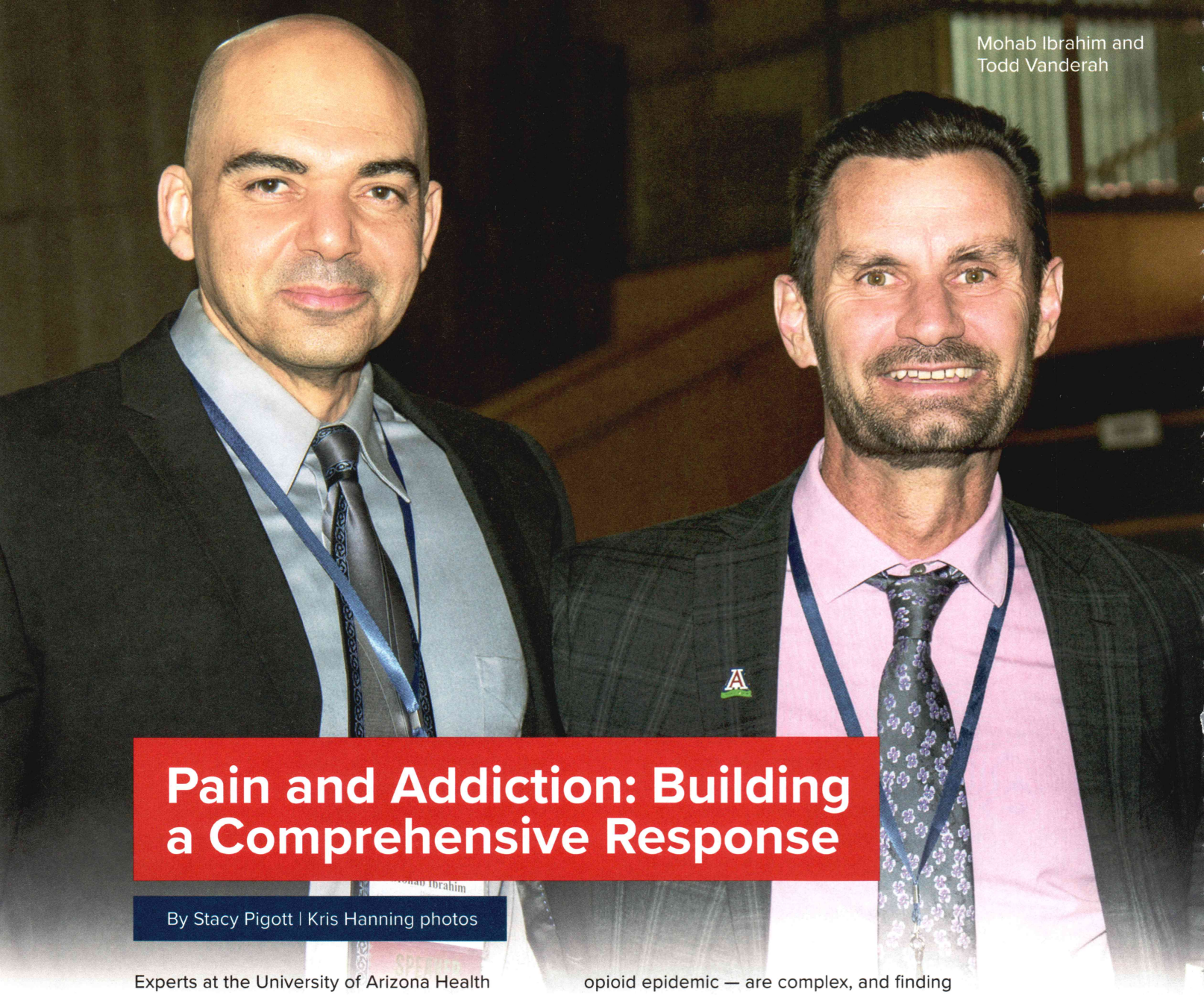
"That was one of the promises that we made to our state government. And I intend to fulfill it."

He's already seen the culture shift a little. "I see talks being given by academic scientists," he says. "And, you know, sometimes we'll have to put up our financial disclosures and things like that. And it used to be that people would rush through it because it was something to be embarrassed about." Science was pure, business was dirty. "Now, what I see is people are proud of it," he says. "Because what it means is that you're actually trying to move something forward into the clinic, or a diagnostic, or something that has direct implications for human health."

Listening to Bhattacharya talk, you get the sense of someone trying to reconcile the best qualities of divergent approaches the way one might make a stronger rope by braiding different materials: the experimental nature of academia with the bottom line of the entrepreneur, the process of research with the product of applied medicine.

"Leadership isn't something I'd ever thought of," he says. "If this were just, like, 'OK, we want you to be the chair of an existing department'? Not a chance." In CAMI, he sees the opportunity to do something new. "A real experiment," he says. "I mean, hopefully it works, right? But that's the fun part."

Fun? For some, maybe. Plenty others might prefer the comfort of a sure bet. In the meantime, he's preparing. What'll it be like? What changes await? He'll probably have to dress a little differently, he says, tugging at the neck of his polo shirt. Whatever happens, he's ready. ◆



Mohab Ibrahim and Todd Vanderah

Pain and Addiction: Building a Comprehensive Response

By Stacy Pigott | Kris Hanning photos

Experts at the University of Arizona Health Sciences Comprehensive Center for Pain & Addiction are tackling the interconnected issues of substance misuse, chronic pain and addiction.

Approximately 100 million people in the U.S. are affected by chronic and acute pain, which can negatively impact peoples' lives in significant ways and increase rates of morbidity, mortality and disability. The opiods traditionally used to treat chronic pain, however, have been implicated in the growing public health crisis known as the opioid epidemic.

In 2017, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared a public health emergency to address the opioid epidemic, which is responsible for the deaths of more than 47,000 people a year in the U.S.

Both issues — chronic pain and the opioid epidemic — are complex, and finding a solution will require a collaborative mindset and a multifaceted approach. That's where the Comprehensive Center for Pain & Addiction comes in.

"Everybody seems to know somebody with an addiction problem," says Todd Vanderah, Ph.D., director of the Comprehensive Center for Pain & Addiction and Regents Professor and head of the College of Medicine – Tucson's Department of Pharmacology. "We don't do a great job of treating chronic pain, since physicians and insurance plans have been limited to the idea of simply prescribing a medication like opiates.

"When you look at how many people have troubles with pain and addiction, it's interesting that nobody has organized a center that focuses on all the aspects — health care, education,

Cannabis sativa contains about 540 chemical substances known as cannabinoids, several of which are being studied as potential options for non-opioid pain relief.

research, clinical trials, legislation, technology — to improve outcomes. That's our goal: We're going to look at all of it as a cohesive group."

Many of the center's scientists, Vanderah included, are researching alternatives to opioids and testing those novel molecular compounds in preclinical studies. Other members, including Mohab Ibrahim, MD, Ph.D., the center's medical director and a pain management physician, specialize in studying and treating chronic pain.

"When someone comes to us with a chronic pain condition, we do a comprehensive medical exam and history. We try to find out everything that's medically related to the condition, and based on that, we'll come up with a complete plan," says Ibrahim, a professor of anesthesiology in the College of Medicine – Tucson and director of Banner – University Medical Center's Chronic Pain Clinic. "It's not always medications that help. Sometimes, it's something as simple as lifestyle modification."

The Comprehensive Center for Pain & Addiction offers researchers an opportunity to build on preclinical studies in medicinal chemistry, drug formulation and pharmacokinetics with potential clinical trials of Food and Drug Administration-approved investigational drugs.

"It would be like a dream to go from the chemistry of actually making new compounds all the way through to patient clinical trials and having a novel medication or therapy accepted by the FDA for use worldwide," says Vanderah, who also is a member of the university's BIO5 Institute.

"The only way to advance and move forward is to propose new ideas, explore them and see if they can provide any benefits for the patients," Ibrahim adds. "One of the ways to do that is through research, and that's where the center becomes the perfect bridge between clinical medicine and research medicine. It's where pain physicians, pharmacologists, chemists, pharmacists, neuroscientists and biomedical engineers can come together and share ideas."

In addition to drug development, key parts of the center's mission include community outreach, education, legislation and technology development.

"I think many physicians don't know enough about opiates and addiction, but in addition to educating our clinicians, we need to get the information to the public and into the schools," Vanderah says.

"I think the biggest impact the Comprehensive Center for Pain & Addiction will have is on our community here, in the state of Arizona," Vanderah says. "We can help the community with their chronic pain. We can help with understanding one's addiction, and we can get education out to everybody to better understand how these things can influence the health and well-being of patients, their families and friends." ◆

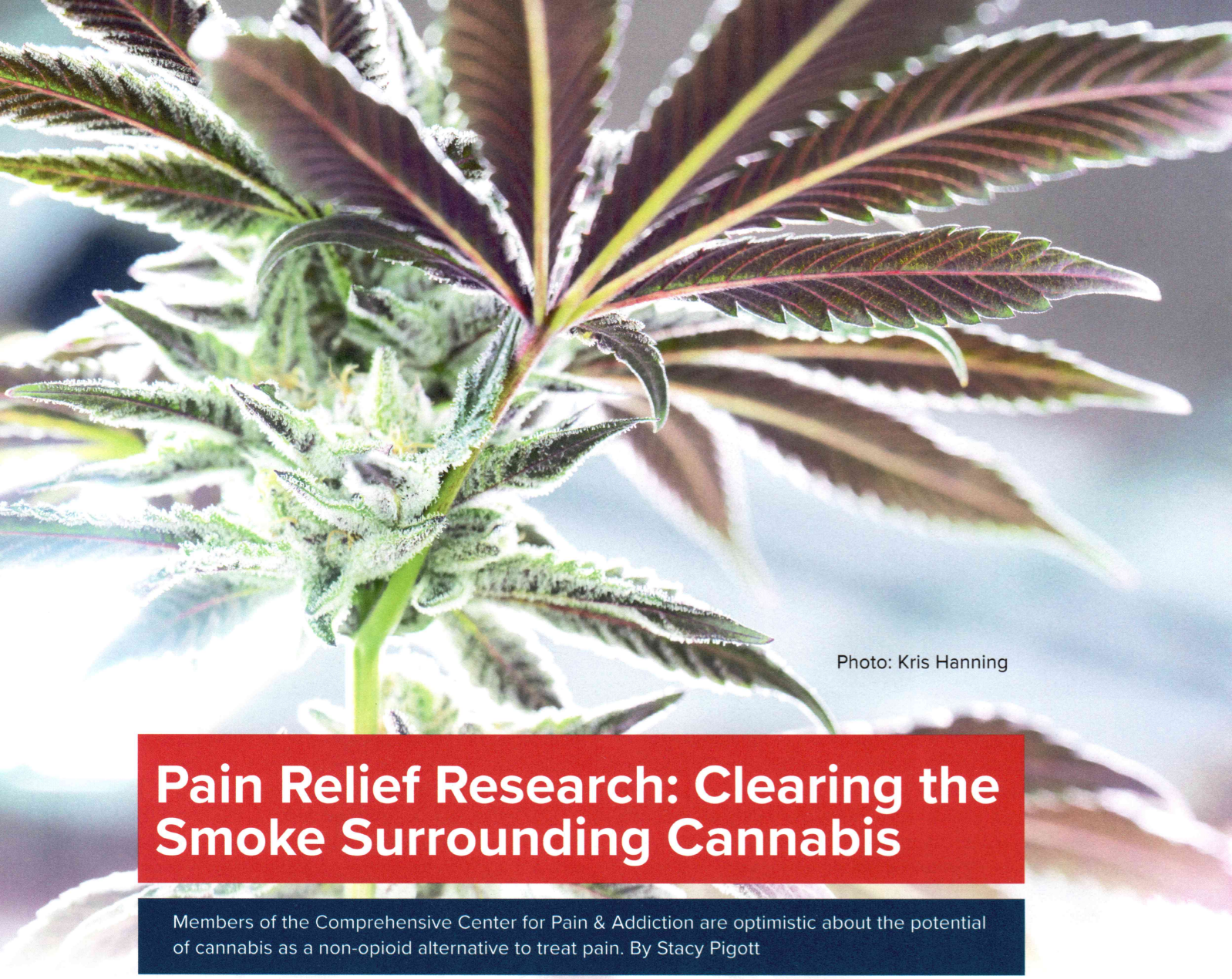


Photo: Kris Hanning

Pain Relief Research: Clearing the Smoke Surrounding Cannabis

Members of the Comprehensive Center for Pain & Addiction are optimistic about the potential of cannabis as a non-opioid alternative to treat pain. By Stacy Pigott

Cannabis: It's a topic surrounded by controversy. In the United States, public opinion and politicians have long grappled with the legal, ethical and societal implications of its use. What regulations are needed? Is it addictive? Is it safe? Only recently have scientists begun to unravel the mysteries of *Cannabis sativa*, a plant that is cultivated for food, fiber and, in every part of the world, medicinal use.

At the University of Arizona Health Sciences, researchers are expanding the scientific knowledge of cannabis with a focus on two distinct areas: pain and addiction. Leading the way is Todd Vanderah, Ph.D., director of U of A Health Sciences Comprehensive Center for Pain & Addiction. Vanderah has spent two decades studying cannabinoids, the compounds found in cannabis.

"I've worked at seeking to understand chronic pain for many years, trying to figure out how we could develop new compounds to help people with pain that weren't opiates and weren't addictive. One of the areas we began to explore was cannabinoids," says Vanderah, Regents Professor and head of the Department of Pharmacology at the College of Medicine – Tucson.

Cannabis contains about 540 chemical compounds. THC, or tetrahydrocannabinol, is the cannabinoid responsible for the plant's psychoactive effects and has been the focus of much research through the years. CBD, or cannabidiol, has a chemical structure slightly different than THC. It doesn't produce psychoactive effects, and little is known about its activity.

'We are only just beginning to understand all of the different chemicals that are naturally present in cannabis. ... I'm probably the most excited about understanding the endocannabinoid system.'

Even less is known about other cannabinoids and other parts of the plant, such as terpenes, which give cannabis its distinctive aroma and taste.

"We are only just beginning to understand all of the different chemicals that are naturally present in cannabis," says Vanderah, who is a member of the BIO5 Institute. "I'm probably the most excited about understanding the endocannabinoid system."

Those are the cannabinoids that the human body makes.

Most people know endorphins cause the "runner's high" often experienced by athletes. Endorphins are the body's endogenous, or naturally occurring, opioids. Once produced, endogenous opioids activate receptors that produce physiological changes such as pain relief.

Exogenous opioids, those that are not naturally produced and originate from outside the body, work by co-opting the endogenous opioid system. Prescription drugs, such as OxyContin, target and activate opioid receptors. Once activated, the receptors produce the same result as endorphins: pain relief.

In a similar fashion, the body produces endogenous cannabinoids. While scientists have been studying the endogenous opioid system since the 1970s, research into the endogenous cannabinoid system, or endocannabinoid system, is still in its infancy. Researchers know endocannabinoids play a role in maintaining cellular balance, and many believe the endocannabinoid system also helps regulate functions such as mood, appetite and sleep.

"Our bodies make cannabinoids, and we make plenty of them," says Vanderah. "A number of studies have shown that physical exercise increases the amount of endocannabinoids in circulation, just like endorphins. One review pointed out that stress can release endocannabinoids, and the increased levels of endocannabinoids may actually decrease some of that stress."

Early cannabinoid research has identified two cannabinoid receptors and enzymes that make and break down endocannabinoids. The receptors, dubbed CB1 and CB2, are located throughout the body, including in the central and peripheral nervous systems.

"CB1 is interesting in that some people suggest it's the highest concentrated receptor in the human brain, and we know that compounds that act at the CB1 receptor will produce psychotropic effects," says Vanderah, who has directed much of his research at the lesser-studied CB2 receptor.

"CB2 receptors are found more on immune cells, and they tend to be on the immune cells of the bones, spleen, colon, liver and pancreas.

"We know there are CB1 and CB2 receptors functioning in many parts of the body. For example, we know there are a lot of receptors in the lungs," Vanderah adds, "but we don't know what they are doing there. There is a lot of research that needs to be done."

With many of the internal mechanisms of the endocannabinoid system identified, researchers are seeking to understand how specific cannabinoids act on those mechanisms, whether changes in the endocannabinoids are related to disease states, and how the endocannabinoid system can be modulated to develop new treatments for pain and inflammation.

To that end, much ofthe University of Arizona's endocannabinoid research focuses on two areas: substances that may act as CB1 and CB2 agonists, meaning they activate the receptors, and enzyme modulators that would alter levels of endocannabinoids.

Recreational use of cannabis is legal in 24 states, with an additional 14 states allowing for medicinal use only. Still, cannabis remains a Schedule I drug, making it challenging for researchers to access and study. That might change, as the DEA and Department of Justice recently recommended reclassifying it as a Schedule III — or "moderate to low potential for physical and psychological dependence" — drug, opening up new paths for research and patient care. ◆

Stephen Dahmer in the Recharge Room at AWCIM
Photos: Chris Richards

Small Steps Add Up

Data meets innovation at the Andrew Weil Center for Integrative Medicine.
By Mike Powell

Waves crest and roll in, filling the room with soft "shh-shh-shhhh" sounds. With the press of a button, visitors can switch to the pinks and blues of the aurora borealis streaming over a mountain lake, or a starry night sky that moves with their bodily motions, creating a trail of light.

This is the recharge room at the Andrew Weil Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona, an immersive space for relaxation and recovery designed by Mirelle Philips of the New York-based firm Studio Elsewhere. Proven to reduce stress by 60% in just 15 minutes, these rooms will join a litany of evidence-based therapies from acupuncture and meditation to more conventional treatments like prescription drugs and surgery in an effort to fulfill what Dr. Weil and his colleagues call integrative medicine.

Spanning 30,000 square feet, the center was designed to represent seven core tenets of integrative medicine: exercise and movement, social relationships, spirituality, healthy nutrition, sleep quality, stress reduction and resilience. Visitors and staff will discover spaces and gardens dedicated to supporting activities in each of these areas.

This is what coaxed Dr. Stephen Dahmer away from his nice life in New York. An integrative and family medicine physician serving as the assistant dean of wellness and chief of the Division of Integrative Medicine in the College of Medicine – Tucson, Dahmer joined the AWCIM team in March as the center's new director, leaving behind more than 10 productive years on the east coast. "After fixing up a mid-century modern with a view of the Hudson, there was only one thing that would take me away," he says. "And that was this job."

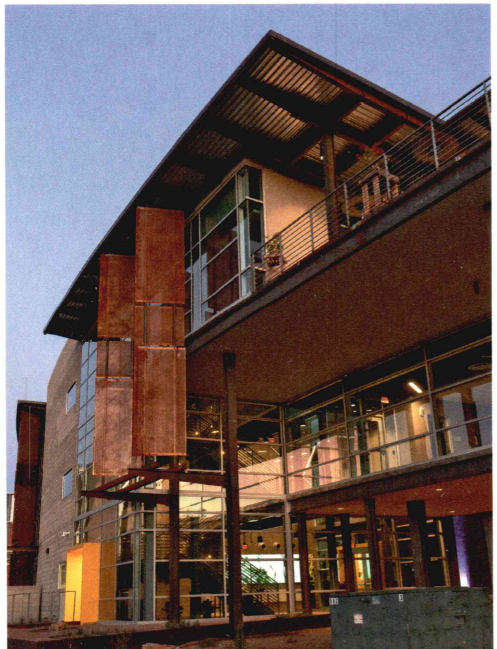
Dahmer has often approached his work in a slightly unconventional way. As medical student at the University of Wisconsin, he took time off to shadow a small team — including a psychiatrist, an internist and a medical anthropologist — in a densely populated, low-income area of Fortaleza, Brazil, where he learned the value of things like community-based healthcare and music therapy in addressing the challenges of an overburdened healthcare system in an underserved community. His dean in Wisconsin worried the break might derail him. Instead, it helped define him.

In 2006 he became a fellow in integrative medicine at AWCIM, driven, in part by "a recognition that it embodied the core reasons I entered the medical field." He later worked as a hospitalist in Chinle, Arizona, before beginning his career in New York and coming back to Arizona in 2024. Enchanted by the desert, he hiked in Sabino Canyon every morning of his first two weeks back in the Old Pueblo to watch the sun rise, discover waterfalls and generally, in his words, "feel the canyon." He was particularly taken with the smell of creosote after rain. "Geeked out," even.

Dahmer's fascination with plants goes back to his days volunteering in Brazil, where he learned about "farmácia viva," or the use of locally grown plants in medicine. Before joining AWCIM, he collaborated with U of A researchers Todd Vanderah and Mohab Ibrahim on a cannabis research grant, and he has studied plant-based medicine and cannabis use for chronic pain management throughout his career.

"Most discussions of cannabis highlight the negative effects of the cannabinoid THC, which can cause intoxication," Dahmer says. But while the cannabinoid CBD is now an FDA approved medication, the plant also contains hundreds of other valuable constituents whose potential health benefits are unknown. "Cannabis is a prime example of a plant that is often misunderstood."

Dahmer was emboldened to take a different path in part because



the conventional ones weren't always leading where they're supposed to. Life expectancy in the U.S. is falling. Infant mortality is rising. Even softer global health indicators like happiness aren't where they used to be.

"If I have an infection or break a bone, there is no place I would rather be than a major hospital system in the U.S.," he says. "But we haven't done as well in addressing chronic diseases, and even less well in the prevention of them. The same goes for things like personalized care, complex disorders and healthcare disparities. In my experience, in order to improve, we need to innovate."

But with innovation comes pushback, or at least skepticism. Even with a practice like acupuncture, where the risks are low and the evidence of positive effects on certain symptoms is strong, Dahmer finds resistance. "As a physician, I've been criticized for recommending it," he says.

This is where data comes in. Simple interventions — like taking 10,000 steps a day, for example — aren't just pleasant ways to spend time, they're activities with "compelling data supporting their ability to prevent and mitigate disease," he says. Or take a breathing technique like the four-seven-eight breath: inhaling for four counts, holding for seven counts and exhaling for eight counts. The positive effects of these techniques compound the same way an investment grows through compound interest, Dahmer says — a comparison that makes them easy to grasp and appealing to try out.

The new center — as well as a new integrative medicine clinic being developed in conjunction with Banner Health in Tucson's Catalina Foothills — should only help Dahmer

and his colleagues strengthen their cause. "One of the best ways to gather more definitive data on the positive impact of integrative health is to have your own clinic," he says.

Dahmer doesn't just introduce his patients to these tenets; he subscribes to them in his own life. He joined a Tucson group practicing capoeira — a Brazilian martial art and dance — to combine exercise, theater, music, and socializing. He also creates simple morning rituals — coffee and a sun salutation or meditation (and not looking at his phone). He is big fan of daily readings and small rituals throughout the day that "help you to remain in the right mindset," whether that's a meditation, a prayer, tea or a mantra.

"Twenty-five years ago, when I started, and decades before when Dr. Weil coined the term and concept of integrative medicine, there was less mainstream science related to the field and far less overall support," Dahmer says. "We've certainly seen marked changes in momentum."

Dahmer himself doesn't follow all seven tenets every day and advises his patients that it might not be possible. But he also knows that the small steps add up. ◆

The Andrew Weil Center for Integrative Medicine complex is 100% donor funded and includes one building with three wings surrounded by desert gardens and connected pathways. The $23 million project was made possible by contributions including $5 million from Iris Cantor and the Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation, $1 million from the Diamond Family Foundation, $1 million from Humberto and Czarina Lopez, $1 million from the Norma Lollar family, $250,000 from Karen and Stephen Malkin and family, and many smaller donations.

Pauline Koelbl (L) and community members. Photo: provided by Koelbl

Fulbright Brilliance

Two U of A alums are transforming global communities. By Tim Vanderpool

After World War II, visionaries saw an opportunity to improve relationships and understanding among countries. Leading this effort was James William Fulbright, a senator from Arkansas who was well known for international relations. As a result, a program bearing his name — the Fulbright — adopted the mission of building mutual understanding between nations.

Now, the program dispatches approximately 9,000 students, teachers, scholars, artists and professionals around the world each year, where they pursue graduate studies, research or teaching. The Fulbright is administered by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and jointly funded by the U.S. and host governments. It's a distinguished club whose past participants include 62 Nobel Prize recipients, 90 Pulitzer Prize winners and more than 42 current or former heads of government.

This venerable roster also includes more than a few Wildcats. In fact, the University of Arizona has an excellent track record of supporting graduating seniors, alumni, graduate students, faculty and staff in their pursuit of Fulbright opportunities. Last year, a record 17 U of A faculty and staff became Fulbright Scholars. And over the past few decades more than 240 graduating seniors, alumni, and graduate students have won U.S. Student Program Fulbright awards.

Meet two of the scholars who are among this excellent group of U.S. Student Fulbright Program awardees.

Connecting Philanthropy and the Private Sector to Change Lives

Some people are destroyed by tragedy; others glean wisdom from it. Among the latter is Pauline Koelbl '07, who landed in Tucson as a documented refugee after fleeing the Rwandan genocide, and now runs two organizations aimed at unlocking the potential of African entrepreneurs and innovators while addressing the existing gender funding gap. She believes this is the smart way to tackle poverty on the continent.

"After the genocide, my interest was to learn something that would allow me to go back and address issues around poverty," she says, "because I was convinced that the experience of Rwanda was linked to poverty."

The term, she explains, is multifaceted. "There are different levels of poverty. There's the poverty linked to not having access to opportunities or enough information and the poverty linked to natural resources."

Koelbl is working hard to address the poverty linked to the lack of access to opportunities Today, she directs two organizations focused on supporting African

'International studies was really a way to go back and connect with my roots. My old roots and my new roots. And it helped me find ways to contribute to making the world a better place.'

entrepreneurs and innovators, primarily women. She is the founder and CEO of AfriProspect, a Swiss-based company that connects African innovators with global markets and finds seed money for impact-driven, female-led businesses. She also is the founder and managing partner of Mauritius-based ShEquity, which provides smart and sustainable investments for African female entrepreneurs and innovators.

This calling traces back to her experiences as a double Fulbright scholar — and to the U of A, where she was an international studies major in the W.A. Franke Honors College. "International studies was really a way to go back and connect with my roots," she says. "My old roots and my new roots. And it helped me find ways to contribute to making the world a better place."

For Koelbl, the support she received in the international studies program was powerful. "It was built around the students, the regions and issues that they cared about. And it was unique in the way that the director, Wayne Decker, really dedicated his life to the students. When we graduated, we all felt better prepared to utilize our knowledge to impact the world."

Upon graduating, she garnered a string of awards including the Pillars of Excellence Recognition Program Award, the U of A Centennial Achievement Award and an Honors College Outstanding Senior Award. She was encouraged to apply for the Fulbright, which enabled her to earn a master's in poverty and development from the prestigious Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom. She went on to work for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) under a second Fulbright and completed an executive education program in innovation for economic development from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Her diverse lived experiences give her a perspective that differs from the typical approach of non-governmental organizationsm, or NGOs, to addressing poverty. "When NGOs talk about alleviating poverty, they tend to focus on treating the symptoms instead of focusing on the root causes of those symptoms," she says. "New approaches are needed, rather than the typical international development approaches that have been applied over and over and have not yielded satisfactory results in comparison to the allocated resources."

That new approach involves tackling poverty by creating economic opportunity. "I wanted to focus on supporting African entrepreneurs and innovators, because they are better positioned to create viable solutions to address local challenges. However, they often lack resources and support needed to benchmark and scale those solutions. I have networks in different markets, which I can leverage to facilitate access to investment needed while also creating unique opportunities for impact-driven investors to generate triple bottom line return: profit combined with impact on people and the planet."

That impact is most critical among African women, she says. "They don't have enough access to financial capital, compared to men, even when they provide equally excellent products and services. In Africa, we're talking about a $42 billion gender funding gap. It's glaring. But it's also a business opportunity."

Koelbl says she has been working internationally with "amazing people who have the money and inspiration to do things differently." She set up ShEquity as an impact fund to mobilize smart investments for women-owned and -led businesses in Africa. "It's not a charity, and it's not microfinance," she says.

Instead, she calls investment in women a smart approach to creating prosperity for everyone, because its trickle-down impact includes lifting many families out of poverty. Research shows that women-managed startups deliver at least two and a half times the revenue of those managed by men. And it is widely known that women reinvest 90% of their income back into families and communities, compared to 35% by men.

"When engaging with developing markets, people tend to want to bring a handout," Koelbl says. "But I'm convinced that we need to connect philanthropic funding with private investments to achieve greater impact and really change lives."

Advocating for Indigenous Peoples Sovereignty

Sometimes, the best perspective on where you're going comes from where you've been. Consider Vince Redhouse '15 '21, a Wildcat and a member of the Navajo Nation. In 2015, he traveled to Australia as a Fulbright scholarship recipient, where he studied political reconciliation between that nation's Aboriginal people and the government that colonized them.

He came away with the conclusion that true political reconciliation between any Indigenous people and their settler colonial government requires starting from scratch: returning their autonomy and land and letting them decide whether an accord with the government is worthwhile.

Redhouse also left Australia convinced that he could best help

Vince Redhouse (R) and international Indigenous youth at the Navajo Nation Washington Office in D.C. Redhouse worked with the State Department to help bring youth to the White House Tribal Youth Forum and then coordinated a visit to the office.
Photos: Provided by Redhouse

Indigenous people by becoming a lawyer. Today, he works for a top tribal-focused law firm.

It was while he was studying philosophy, politics, economics and law as an undergrad that advisers in the W.A. Franke Honors College suggested he apply for a Fulbright. At the time, he says, he didn't even know what the award was. "But they really helped me identify the type of project that would make sense for me and where it would make sense for me to do it. Having those relationships was absolutely crucial."

His project, pursued at Australian National University, focused on political reconciliation between Aboriginal peoples and Australia. Aboriginal people — Australia's first inhabitants — have dwelled on that continent for 65,000 years. But, like North American Indigenous tribes, they were driven from their homelands and treated with hostility by white settlers.

When the British began colonizing Australia in 1788, they brought with them European diseases that raged through the Aboriginal populations. An estimated 20,000 Indigenous people also died in violent clashes with the colonizers.

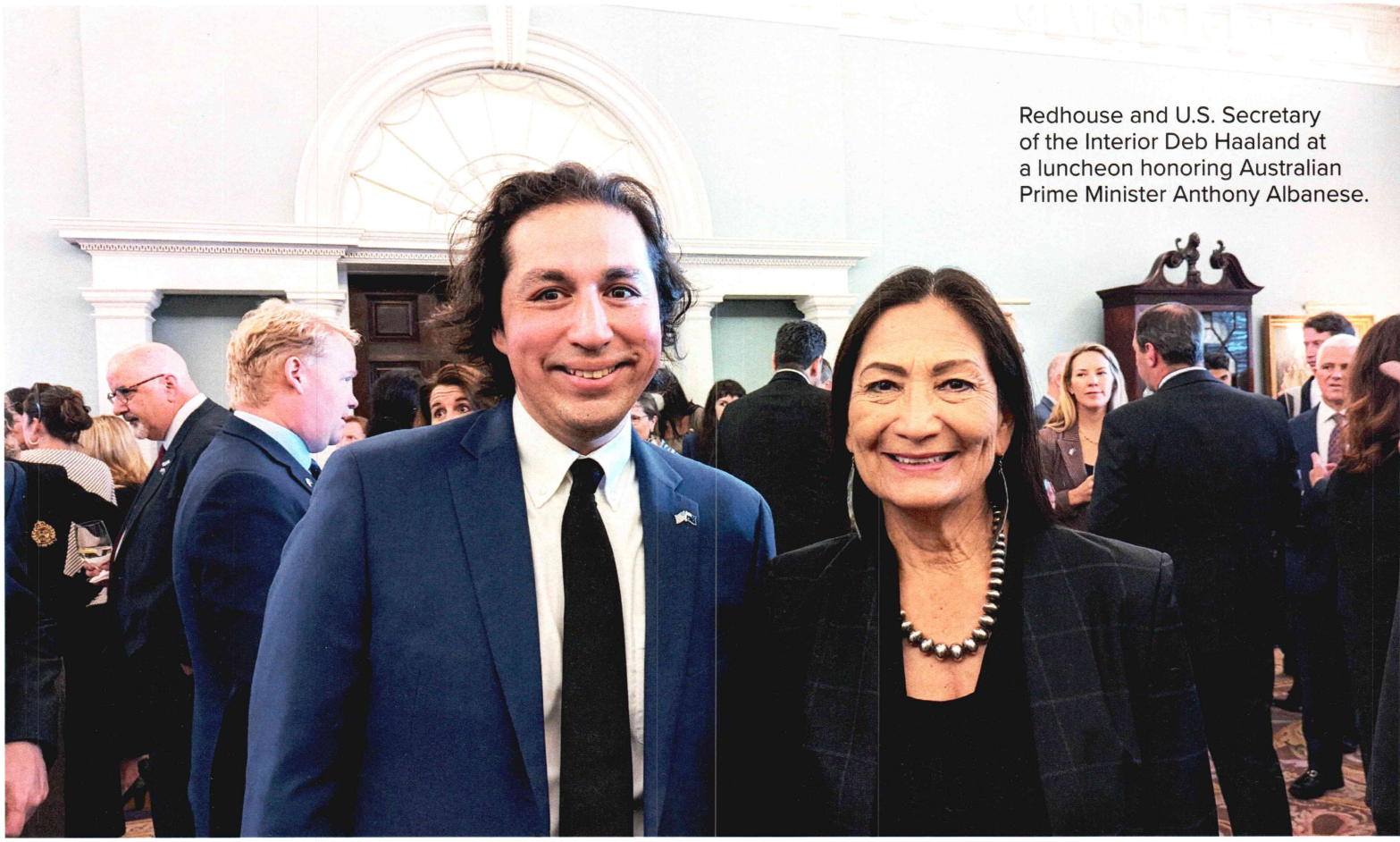
Similar to practices in the United States, many Aboriginal children throughout the 20th century were removed from their homes and sent to grim institutions in attempts to exorcise their cultural heritage. Many were also punished for speaking their native languages.

And discrimination continues today; in 2023, Australian voters soundly defeated a national referendum to include recognition of Aboriginal people in the national constitution and to require that their needs carry weight in parliamentary debate.

The issues, concerns and history of violence struck home for Redhouse, who was invited to political events and met Australian Parliament members and staff working on Indigenous issues.

"I was doing research and talking to those staffers — and just listening to the needs of Indigenous peoples out there and knowing the needs of Indigenous people" in America, he says. "Toward the end of my Fulbright, I realized that I would be a much more useful advocate for Indigenous peoples if I had legal training."

'You need to put Indigenous peoples in a position where they can effectively say 'no' to reconciling with you. And if you put them in that position, and they nonetheless decide to submit to your authority, then that's when you can claim you have moral authority — that's when you can say things are truly reconciled.'



Redhouse and U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland at a luncheon honoring Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

He returned to the U of A, earned a law degree in 2021 and now practices in Washington, D.C., with Hobbs, Straus, Dean & Walker LLP, a law firm devoted to advancing and defending tribal rights.

He also has pondered the insights he gained overseas and continues to feel that true political reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and settler colonial states is contingent on acknowledging the right and the ability of Indigenous peoples to decide for themselves how they want to be governed.

For Redhouse, the moral authority to govern can only be earned by returning the lands and full autonomy to the people from whom they were taken, including the choice of how to move forward. Anything less, he says, is the same kind of coercion Indigenous peoples have experienced historically.

"You need to put Indigenous peoples in a position where they can effectively say 'no' to reconciling with you. And if you put them in that position, and they nonetheless decide to submit to your authority, then that's when you can claim you have moral authority — that's when you can say things are truly reconciled. It's very hard to put it into practice, but I think the exercise itself is something to strive toward."

In the meantime, Redhouse is leveraging his award to create a better future for Indigenous peoples. He also has lobbied for a Fulbright exchange program between the U of A and a sister institution in Australia and has become a Fulbright Alumni Ambassador, traveling to conferences, colleges, and universities where he encourages Native American students to apply for the scholarship like he did.

"There's the need to create a new generation of Indigenous leaders that have the opportunity to lead on a global scale on global issues," he says. "They can learn from each other about what their respective nations are doing to advance the rights and interests of Indigenous people." ◆

Retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen. M. Ted Wong presents Hom Moon Jung's Congressional Medal of Honor at a December 2021 ceremony in Scottsdale, Arizona, to Moon Hom, left, and Paul Hom. Photos: Provided by Hom Family

FAMILY PLAN

A line of U of A engineers honor their ancestors by giving back.
By Katy Smith

When Hom Moon Jung graduated from the University of Arizona College of Engineering in 1937, he began a family legacy. His three sons – Moon Hom '74, Paul Hom '77 and Don Hom '78 – also completed U of A engineering degrees, as have two grandsons, Chris Hom '08 and Ted Hom '08. Four other grandchildren have earned U of A degrees in other fields.

Now, Paul and Moon Hom have endowed the HOM MOON JUNG Memorial Scholarship to ensure more future engineers can work in their chosen field.

Teaching Service and Generosity

Hom Moon Jung emigrated from China when he was a teenager. He studied mining engineering at U of A, and his friend Soleng Tom studied aerospace engineering. The roommates took turns working and going to school each semester to support one another. The family believes Hom Moon Jung was one of the first Chinese Americans to graduate from the College of Engineering.

After graduating and working briefly as a mine surveyor, Hom Moon Jung served in the U.S. Army during World War II, along with his two brothers. After the war, he opened a grocery store in Tucson – T&T Market – with Tom.

"The political and social environments were very different than today, and he was not able to find an engineering job," says Paul Hom.

Later, Hom Moon Jung opened Desert Trailer Market, which became the backdrop for his sons' childhoods and the place where he taught them about the value of work and helping others. The market was on West Miracle Mile just east of Interstate 10, and the family's home was attached.

"Running the stores took 14 or 15 hours of hard work every day from our father and mother," says Paul Hom.

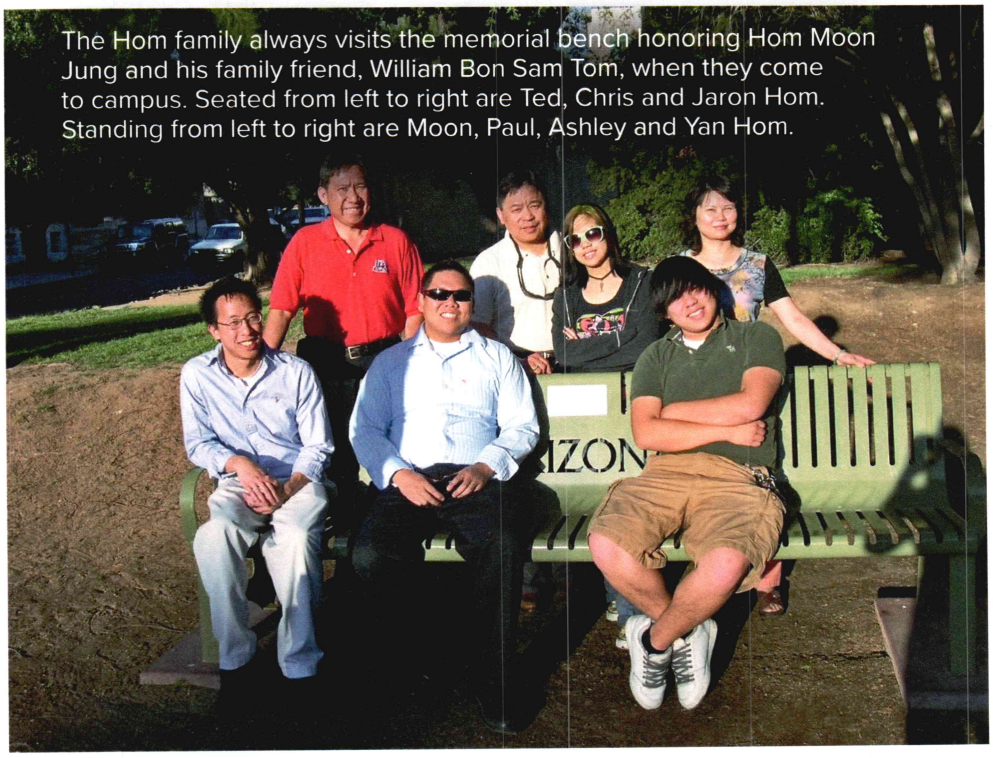
Hom Moon Jung extended credit to those who were struggling and fed those with nothing to eat, his sons say. He also learned conversational Spanish to better

communicate with the store's many Hispanic customers, says Moon Hom.

The three sons agree that their parents' work ethic and generosity instilled those same values in them.

Hom Moon Jung also impressed upon his sons a respect for duty through his service in World War II. In 2021, his sons accepted a Congressional Gold Medal on his behalf. Congress issued medals to Chinese and Chinese American veterans of the war in recognition of their heroism and the discrimination they faced in building thriving communities in the U.S.

"It meant quite a bit to us," says Paul Hom.



The Hom family always visits the memorial bench honoring Hom Moon Jung and his family friend, William Bon Sam Tom, when they come to campus. Seated from left to right are Ted, Chris and Jaron Hom. Standing from left to right are Moon, Paul, Ashley and Yan Hom.

Family Unity

Hom Moon Jung passed away in 1973, and the family kept the store open for another three years while the three sons pursued their engineering degrees, Moon Hom in mining engineering and Paul and Don Hom in mechanical engineering.

During that period, Paul Hom took a break from school to focus on the store. In addition to needing time to study, the brothers faced difficult competition from chain stores.

These experiences later moved Moon and Paul Hom to help mechanical, mining and chemical engineering students access education. Their scholarship, when possible, will go to students who are working while attending school. And it will honor their father in perpetuity.

Both college supporters, Moon and Paul Hom first considered honoring their father's legacy at U of A around 25 years ago when they sponsored a memorial bench in memory of Hom Moon Jung and his family friend, William Bon Sam Tom, together with the Tom family. The brothers grew up with the Tom family, who also owned a grocery store.

Four of the five Tom children also earned engineering degrees. For Don Hom, growing up with the Toms encouraged him to pursue his engineering education.

All three believe their father would be proud to know his sons and grandsons have completed engineering degrees. Paul Hom's son, Chris, and Moon Hom's son, Ted, both graduated with chemical engineering degrees. Chris Hom is a process engineering team lead at Chevron. Ted Hom is a quality engineering manager for GE HealthCare.

Attending the university with his cousin was a great experience for Chris Hom.

"It was good to have family close by, as both of our families were in Phoenix," he says. "We rushed the same fraternity [Phi Kappa Tau] and have many good friends from our time in college." ◆

'It was good to have family close by, as both of our families were in Phoenix. ... We rushed the same fraternity and have many good friends from our time in college.'

Josie Aslakson
Photos: Team USA

LEVELING UP

Women's wheelchair basketball coach Josie Aslakson heads to the Paralympics.
By Matthew Morris

A few times in her early, striving years, Josie Aslakson '20 almost gave up on her dreams.

That she didn't is in no small part because of her father. A spare-time fisherman in her hometown of Jordan, Minnesota, her father loves fishing about as much as Aslakson loves playing wheelchair basketball, which the two-time Paralympian does better than almost anyone. Her father is her "unofficial coach," she says, who never let her quit on herself and has always told her, "Passions in life are very important to follow."

"He's like, '[Fishing] is my passion. And I go to the river, and I fish, and I love it, and I'm obsessed with it,'" she says. "And he's like, 'I think basketball for you is something special like that. That it's going to follow you through life, and it's going to help you."

Back in 2015, the year before the Rio de Janeiro games, Aslakson was 19, trying out for Team USA. She'd been cut twice already, being too young, she says, and not up to the pace of play at her sport's highest level. She was on a wheelchair basketball scholarship at the University of Texas, Arlington, then; naturally athletic, she'd played the game since 13.

In just a few years, wheelchair hoops had changed her. "[Basketball] really transformed who I am as a person," says Aslakson, who lost the use of her legs in a car accident when she was 5. "When I was young and growing up with a disability in a small town, I was very shy and didn't talk much and didn't have any confidence in making friends or interacting.

"And then I found basketball."

But for all the sport had given her, Aslakson had doubts as to her future in it. "Maybe I'm not cut out for this," she recalls thinking. "Maybe I should pursue other things."

When she again didn't make the 12-woman Team USA roster, Aslakson realized she needed a break. She didn't try out in 2016 — her sophomore year of college, when Texas, Arlington, won an NCAA championship. But she re-entered the Paralympian fray the year after — and this time, she made the team. Aslakson kept her spot on the roster through the 2021 Tokyo games, where the Americans won bronze, and has held on to it since. In November 2023, she and her teammates won a gold medal at the Parapan American Games in Santiago, Chile, securing a bid for the 2024 Paris Paralympics.

Her college career concluded in 2020; after two transfers, she finished at the University of Arizona, whose adaptive athletics program turns 50 this year. And today, Aslakson serves as head coach of the U of A women's wheelchair team alongside her Team USA teammate and very close friend, Courtney Ryan, an assistant coach. The two are among the 14 Wildcat Paralympians, including students and alumni, representing countries like the U.S., Australia and Japan, who've honed their talents while student-athletes in Tucson.

"They're all deeply driven, singularly focused. They're not super social: You ask them to go to the movies, they'll say no. They've got to train. They've got to eat right," says Pete Hughes, Arizona Adaptive Athletics director.

Formerly the women's wheelchair basketball coach, Hughes recruited Ryan in 2012 after watching her hit a game-winner in a tournament in Phoenix, where she was

playing for a community team. He offered her a scholarship on the spot. "She had it," he says now. With Ryan on the team, the Wildcats — who did not yet compete in the NCAA — won the women's division national title in 2012 and 2014, finishing as runners-up in 2013 and 2015.

She's not the only Paralympian coached by Hughes, who calls a light touch best.

"The thing about coaching a Paralympian is you basically get out of the way," he says. "You just give them a little encouragement here and there, and you're there to support, but they're on their path already."

To be a Paralympian in the U.S., Aslakson notes, is not the same as in other countries, where athletes live at training sites year-round and "just show up — day in, day out," she says. She and her teammates, in contrast, do most of their training away from the Paralympic and Olympic training grounds in Colorado Springs, coming together for three days of intense work each month to build and sustain team chemistry. In the weeks between, Aslakson and her teammates keep their own schedules, determining which days to lift, do cardio and complete skill work. She and Ryan often complete shooting workouts together.

Aslakson says that working full time while staying in top form for the Paralympic team is a balancing act. But for her, basketball is always at the center of her life. "Whether I'm coaching or playing," she says, "it's not like I have to compromise my focus." She would like to guide her team to an NCAA championship, and when her players express a desire to someday play for Team USA, she adopts the attitude learned from her dad: "I'm not going to make you do this. But I'm not going to let you get discouraged if you don't make a team."

She calls being a member of the Paralympic team "surreal." She remembers learning about the team when she was just starting out. And she remembers the days when she questioned herself — comparing that time to now, when she is a trusted veteran, still firmly in the game that has given direction to her life while granting mentorship to her players along the way.

It's something she couldn't always have done.

"The sport of basketball is very intense and loud, and you have to talk to your teammates, so it really brought me out of my shell and made me communicate a lot more," she says. Without that experience, she adds, "I don't think I would be able to be in a coaching role."

As Aslakson has grown in the sport, the recognition for adaptive sports has also grown. Hughes, an advocate for adaptive athletes through his nonprofit, Wheelchair Athletes Worldwide, points out that as of 2020, Paralympic and Olympic medals are worth equal amounts of money. And, he notes, the national organizing body is now the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee, one of only four national Olympic committees in the world that combines the two roles in one body.

But, he says, society has "a long way to go" in celebrating adaptive sports and athletes.

Aslakson, meanwhile, says that "especially for adaptive athletes, the biggest thing that we can gain is visibility." And in following her passion, she's drawing attention not only to herself and her Team USA teammates but also to the next generation of players she mentors.

Gifts to Adaptive Athletics

In the last year, Adaptive Athletics has received support from multiple donors, including longtime university supporters Jim and Vicki Click and Cole and Jeannie Davis. The Clicks committed a $6.5 million gift, providing the program with resources to recruit elite athletes well into the future. The Davises committed $1 million to the program to help ensure equity for disabled student-athletes and expand access to resources for student support and career readiness.◆

2007 Softball World Series Championship (Coach Lowe is front left, Mike Candrea at far right) Photos: Arizona Athletics

FAREWELL, PAC-12

One conference winds down ... | By Matthew Morris

Caitlin Lowe remembers stepping into the batter's box to face UCLA's Keira Goerl, fighting alongside her Arizona softball teammates to scratch across a run or two against the stingy Bruins ace. She remembers her teammate Kristie Fox — the "clutch queen" — coming up with game-changing hits when the Wildcats most needed a boost. She remembers matching up against her sisters when coach Mike Candrea's championship-winning teams traveled north to play Oregon State, and she remembers her travel-ball youth, when she and everyone else just wanted to someday play for Arizona, UCLA or another Pac-12 juggernaut.

Well, Pac-10, back then.

The conference was prestigious in the eyes of Lowe and her Orange County, California youth teammates, almost all of whom ended up at either Arizona or UCLA. Even now, having played, won (prolifically) and coached in the conference, she describes the Pac-12 as the "full package": a place where you could compete, sure, but also turn into a full-fledged adult, prepared to make the most of life after college sports.

"We obviously don't want to see it go," she says.

But go it now has. The conference will undergo seismic shifts beginning this fall, when its membership dwindles to just two holdout programs: OSU and Washington State.

The "Conference of Champions" has laid claim to more team national titles than any other; when Washington took it all in the 2017 rowing campaign, it was No. 500 for the legacy league. And departing members Stanford, UCLA and USC — the first bound for the ACC, the last two for the Big 10 — are the winningest programs in all of Division I.

Not to mention Arizona, a program that got in on the Pacific Coast fun in 1978, realigning from the Western Athletic Conference alongside rival-in-chief Arizona State, who will now two-step with the 'Cats to their next stop, the Big 12.

Arizona's 46-year history with the conference, and the numerous trophies earned along the way, could fill a chapter — or a whole book unto itself.

There were, of course, the moonshot softball years — home-run performances for the likes of Lowe and her peers. The Wildcats won it all nationally in — get ready — '91, '93, '94, '96, '97, '01, '06 and '07, the last two with Lowe's steady glove in center field. This school in the Southwest also reached the pantheon in baseball and women's golf (three times each) and men's golf, women's and men's swimming and diving, and men's basketball (once each) during the Pac-10/12 era. That's you, Lute Olson and the 1997 Wildcats.

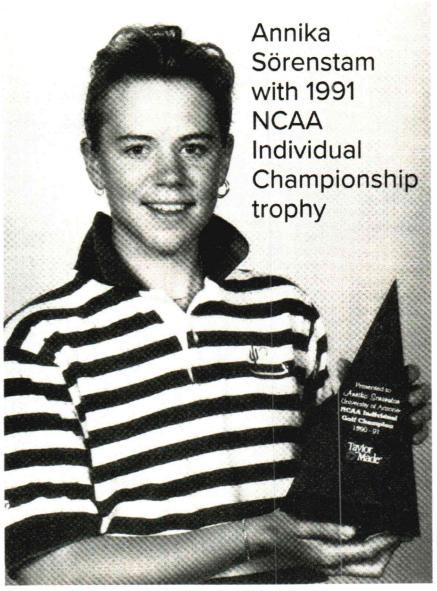
Or as Lowe puts it in her office at McKale: "We've had legends walk through these halls, absolute legends" — folks with "way more to show for it," she adds, "than just those championship banners." Again, she says, it's about the shaping of people through sport.

The conference had a story before Arizona, though, and may have a story after Arizona and nine of its former Pac-12 compatriots bolt for league play — and TV cash — elsewhere. Go back to 1916 for the origin point: to the Imperial Hotel in Portland, Oregon, where charter

2012 Baseball NCAA World Series Championship

Jordan Morgan after 2023 win vs. ASU

Women's Golf 1996 NCAA Championship


Annika Sörenstam with 1991 NCAA Individual Championship trophy

1997 Basketball NCAA Championship

2012 Baseball NCAA World Series Championship

2019 Women's Basketball NIT Championship

members Washington, Oregon, Cal-Berkeley and Oregon Agricultural College (OSU today) hatched plans to roll out the balls and compete.

The Pac-12 began, yes, as the Pac-4, though back then the league eschewed something so changeable as a number, going by a simpler name: the Pacific Coast Conference, or the PCC. Soon after, it was the PCC still, but with a couple new faces (Wazzu, Stanford), and later still came other names both formal and informal: the Athletic Association of Western Universities, the Big Five and Big Six, and the Pac-8, before the Arizona schools came knocking at the conference door.

One constant through the shakeups: a Rose Bowl berth for the league's crowned football team (1917-2023).

Arizona and ASU used to tussle and train in the Border Conference, a league that dissolved way back in 1963. They faced off against NAU and UTEP (well, Texas Western) and Hardin-Simmons (now a Division IIIer) in those bygone days — which is to say that change has and will come, ever and again.

Arizona's Pac-10/12/pick-a-number days might be over, but who knows where the league may end up next?

And as for the Big 12-bound 'Cats?

Lowe: "We're just rolling with the punches." And: "trying to make our mark." ◆

Noah Fifita
Photo: Ary Frank

HELLO, BIG 12

... and another starts up. By Jason Ground

On Aug. 2, the University of Arizona officially became a member of the Big 12 athletic conference after 45 years in the Pac-12. The U of A makes the move alongside Colorado, Utah and Arizona State, bringing the total number of conference members to 16. The transition means new competitors, new fan bases, new traditions and new destinations for Wildcats sports teams and their fans.

It also means a new look for some very prominent parts of campus. U of A Facilities Management crews have cut out the two shield-shaped Pac-12 logos from the football field at Arizona Stadium and replaced them with the Big 12 logo. And a contractor has finished painting the logo on the Lute and Bobbi Olson Court at McKale Memorial Center.

Logo replacement projects at other Arizona Athletics facilities will take place throughout the year, before each sport begins competition.

Arizona fans began shopping for a variety of items commemorating the U of A's inaugural Big 12 season Aug. 26, the first day of the fall semester. The newly remodeled Campus Store, formerly the University of Arizona BookStores, is offering a line of T-shirts and other collectibles that feature the mascots and logos of each Big 12 university.

Big 12 Conference Fun Facts

1. The University of Arizona and fellow conference member Baylor University have played each other in football just one time in their histories. The Bears defeated the Wildcats 20-15 in the 1992 John Hancock Bowl at Sun Bowl Stadium in El Paso, Texas. The two will not face each other in the regular conference season this year.

2. The Wildcats will play against two Big 12 schools who were their rivals in previous conferences. Arizona and Texas Tech competed against each other in the Border Conference for 20 years until the Red Raiders jumped to the now-defunct Southwest Conference in 1952. The Wildcats battled the Brigham Young University Cougars for 16 years, from 1962 to 1978, in the Western Athletic Conference.

3. The Big 12 includes three schools that Arizona has never faced in football: the University of Central Florida, University of Cincinnati and West Virginia University.

4. The Big 12 is the fourth athletic conference for the U of A. The Wildcats were founding members of Border Conference in 1931 and the Western Athletic Conference in 1962. Arizona joined the Pac-10 in 1978, which became the Pac-12 in 2011 with the addition of Colorado and Utah.

5. The U of A is one of five land-grant universities in the Big 12. The others are Iowa State University, Kansas State University, Oklahoma State University and West Virginia University.

6. With the addition of Arizona, six Big 12 men's basketball programs have won national titles: Utah in 1944; Oklahoma State (then known as Oklahoma A&M) in 1945 and 1946; Kansas in 1952, 1988, 2008 and 2022; Cincinnati in 1961 and 1962; Arizona in 1997; and Baylor in 2021.

7. Seven Big 12 marching bands have been awarded the prestigious Sudler Trophy by the John Philip Sousa Foundation for demonstrating the highest musical standards and innovative marching routines: The Pride of Arizona (U of A), Sun Devil Marching Band (ASU), Iowa State University Cyclone Marching Band, Marching Jayhawks (University of Kansas), Kansas State University Marching Band, Goin' Band from Raiderland (Texas Tech) and The Pride of West Virginia (West Virginia University).

8. There are eight named conference rivalries. Aside from the Duel in the Desert, or Territorial Cup, between Arizona and Arizona State, they are:

- **Farmageddon (Iowa State vs. Kansas State)**
- **The Holy War (BYU vs. Utah)**
- **Rumble in the Rockies (Colorado vs. Utah)**
- **Sunflower Showdown (Kansas vs. Kansas State)**
- **Farm Bureau Insurance Shootout (Baylor vs. Texas Tech)**
- **The Revivalry (Baylor vs. TCU)**
- **The West Texas Championship (TCU vs. Texas Tech)**

9. In football, each team will play nine regular-season conference games, and every team will play each other at least once at home and once away over the next four years. See the Wildcats' 2024 schedule below.

- **Aug. 31 vs. New Mexico**
- **Sept. 7 vs. Northern Arizona**
- **Sept. 13 at Kansas State**
- **Sept. 28 at Utah**
- **Oct. 5 vs. Texas Tech**
- **Oct. 12 at BYU**
- **Oct. 19 vs. Colorado (Homecoming)**
- **Oct. 26 vs. West Virginia**
- **Nov. 2 at UCF**
- **Nov. 15 vs. Houston**
- **Nov. 23 at TCU**
- **Nov. 30 vs. Arizona State**
- **Dec. 7 Dr. Pepper Big 12 Championship**

10. The 16 schools in the Big 12 represent 10 states.

11. Eleven Big 12 athletics programs have an animal as a costumed mascot:

Four cats:
Arizona Wildcats (Wilbur and Wilma)
BYU Cougars (Cosmo)
Houston Cougars (Shasta)
Kansas State Wildcats (Willie)

Three birds:
Iowa State Cyclones (Cy the Cardinal)
Kansas Jayhawks (Big Jay and Baby Jay)
Utah Utes (Swoop the red-tailed hawk)

Other animals:
Baylor Bears (Bruiser and Marigold)
Cincinnati Bearcats (The Bearcat)
Colorado Buffaloes (Chip)
TCU Horned Frogs (SuperFrog)

The other five mascots are a knight (University of Central Florida), cowboy (Oklahoma State), mountaineer (West Virginia University), masked rider (Texas Tech) and sun devil (ASU).

12. Arizona will have 12 new conference opponents. The Wildcats' all-time record in football against each is in parentheses.

- **Baylor (0-1)**
- **BYU (12-12-1)**
- **Central Florida (0-0)**
- **Cincinnati (0-0)**
- **Houston (1-3)**
- **Iowa State (4-1-1)**
- **Kansas (2-3-1)**
- **Kansas State (5-1-1)**
- **Oklahoma State (4-5)**
- **TCU (1-1)**
- **Texas Tech (5-26)**
- **West Virginia (0-0)**

Valentina Ayala

A LIGHT TOUCH

Table tennis keeps a club on its toes.
By Johnathan Alexander | Chris Richards photos

In the world of athletics, many see table tennis as dainty compared to other sports. Yet there is nothing dainty in the sub-second time it takes the ball to cross the nine-foot table, nor in the force behind each strike that sends it zipping away.

Valentina Ayala, a University of Arizona student working toward a degree in psychology, says that many underestimate the rigor of table tennis. "People play around for fun, but when you really get into it, good athletics are just as needed as in any other sport."

Other members of the table tennis club agree. To them, table tennis is a more powerful sport than people give it credit for, requiring a solid combination of offense and defense that forms each player's unique style.

Wei Chen Zhang, an officer of the U of A table tennis club, was introduced to the sport when he was 11 years old. As a result of his extensive table tennis experience, he says he understands an opponent's personality by observing their playing style.

"I think play style is based on your personality," says Zhang, who is earning his doctorate in metabolism and diseases at the School of Nutritional Sciences and Wellness in the nutritional sciences graduate program. "For instance, my personality is more introverted, and during matches I always play conservatively."

Quick reaction times are also a must when it comes to the sport. Vinyas Bhat, a mechanical engineering and mathematics major, compares table tennis to tennis, which he grew up playing. "In tennis, you're on a 60-foot court. It takes time for the ball to get back and forth. In table tennis, it's like that," he says, snapping his fingers to emphasize the speed of the ball's flight across the table.

Ayala comments on the perspective gained from one of the teachings of the club's head coach Arnaud Salvador, a table tennis player of 12 years with coaching and referee experience: As fast as table tennis can be, there are times in the sport when one needs to slow down and assess.

"It's a matter of offense and defense, and that's what I really like about it," Ayala says. "Everyone is their own player and has their own style."

Suzanne Ramirez

There is much more to table tennis than striking with an abundance of force. Salvador also teaches techniques for hitting the ball, emphasizing good technique as one of the most important components of the sport.

Vasu Kedia, an electrical and computer engineering major, has played soccer for 10 years and added rock climbing to his athletic repertoire in the last two. Yet the technique required in table tennis has created a new challenge for him. "A lot of other sports I've played, I was able to brute force my way through due to my athleticism. In table tennis, I've started a lot lower than I would have because I'm not used to the technique of holding a racket," he says.

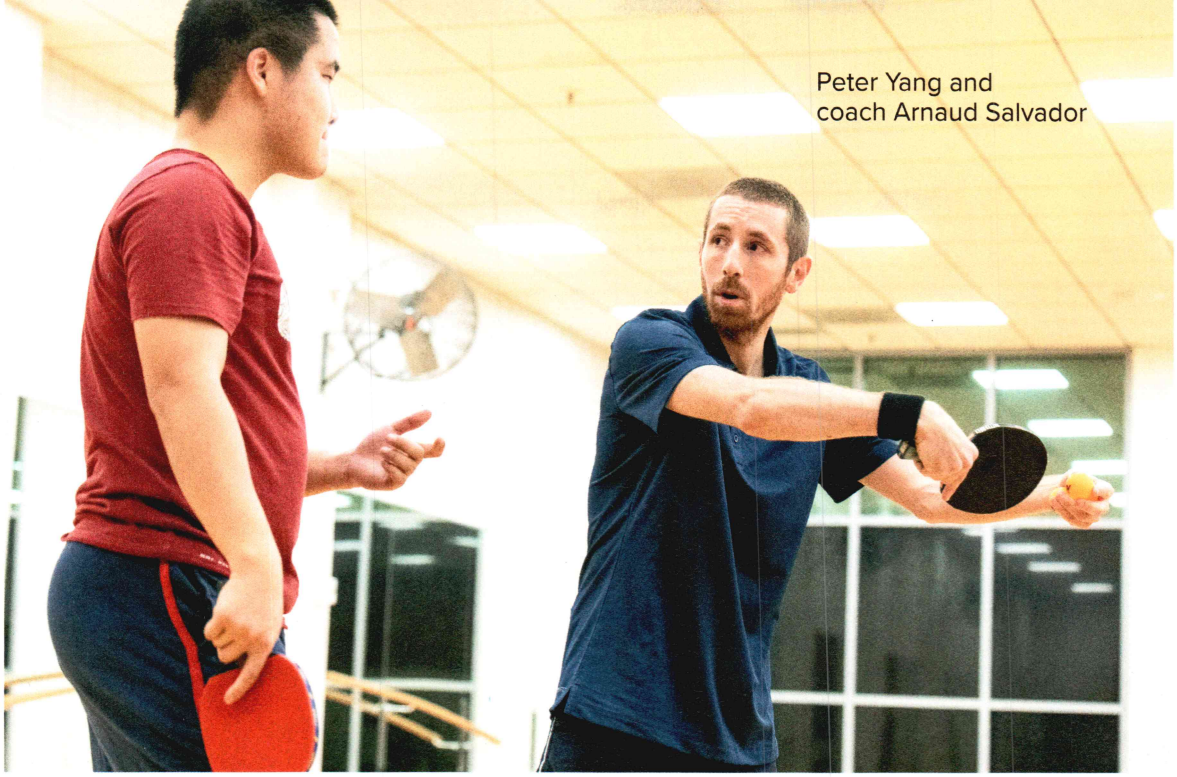
Bhat agrees. "You're hitting a ball that's going very quickly and trying to aim it very precisely into a small area. You need consistent technique."

In addition to teaching club members his own technique, Salvador shares videos of table tennis professionals to introduce a variety of play styles. This helps club members learn varied techniques they can experiment with in their matches.

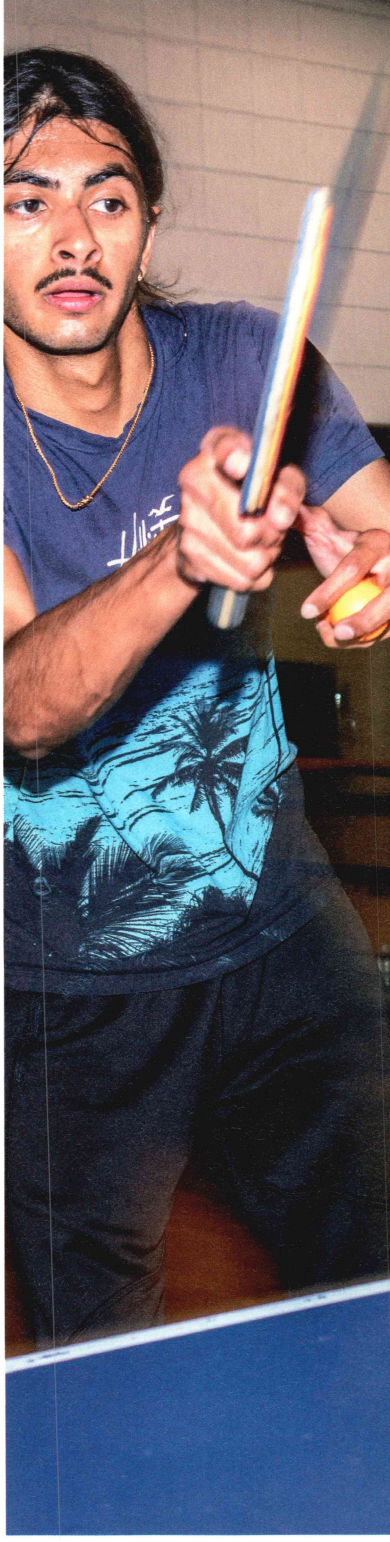
Using new techniques requires dedicated practice. "I feel like we watch a video, and we say, 'This looks really easy,'" Zhang says. "But we have to put a lot of effort into each movement. It takes a long time and can be challenging, because you have to be patient."

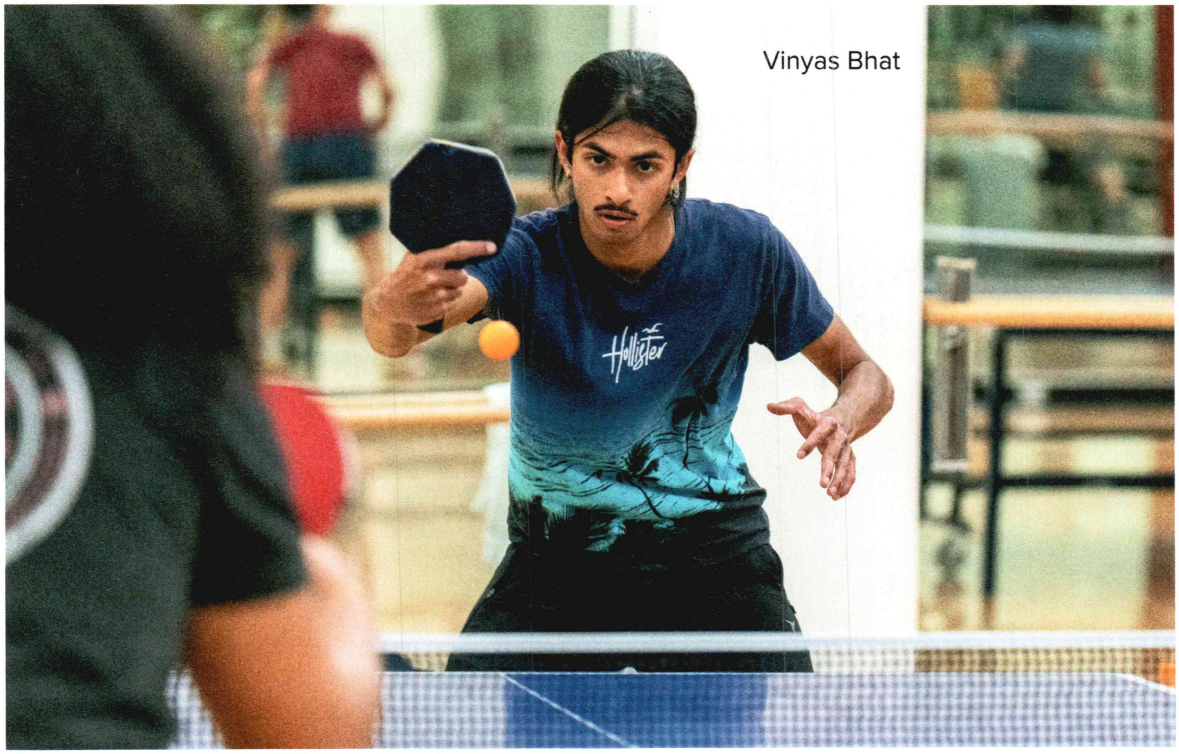
Finding the middle ground between power and technique teaches the team balance. It's a lesson that translates to their daily lives, reminding them to take time and engage with all aspects of life and develop in a well-rounded manner.

"As much as you want to be a super-strong player and win through brute force, that's not the entire game. Just like with school, it isn't the entirety. You have your personal life, your social life," Ayala says. "You can't go 100% in one aspect, otherwise you'll be underdeveloped in other places."



Peter Yang and coach Arnaud Salvador





Vinyas Bhat

Alongside their passion for the sport, the community and positive energy of the club are what draw members to each meeting. Ayala fondly thinks about how the laughs shared between members contribute to her commitment to the club.

"As much as the word 'club' can be intimidating, this is a very grounded space," she says. "It's a place for people to enjoy themselves; it's a place to improve. It's a place to do a lot of things and have different dynamics with everyone. It's an opportunity to connect with people athletically."

To that end, members of the club welcome anyone interested in playing table tennis with open arms — no prior experience required.

Every month, the club hosts an unofficial table tennis tournament open to all, regardless of their skill level. The tournaments create excitement and are an opportunity for players to test their skills and growth.

"I love it in the same way I loved tennis tournaments as a kid," Bhat says. "It's an opportunity to test yourself against yourself."

To learn more about the table tennis club's activities, visit their Instagram page: @ua_tabletennis. ◆

CLASS NOTES

KEEP UP WITH YOUR FELLOW WILDCATS

1940s

Christine Grady Gorder '46 '73 published "In the Shade of the Olive Tree" (Wheatmark), a true story of young love and sacrifice during World War II and its aftermath. Christine worked with the Central Intelligence Agency in Latin America and at CIA headquarters, retiring in 1956. She then became an English as a second language instructor at the University of Arizona, retiring in 1993. She continues to travel and plans to until her passport expires at age 100.

1960s

Morgan Little '66 '67 was recently named in the Marquis Who's Who list of Distinguished Leaders, published in the Wall Street Journal. Morgan is a retired U.S. Navy captain and Vietnam War veteran. He served for over 30 years, holding four commands, and also has over 35 years of pharmaceutical industry experience. He served as president of the Reserve Organization of America Department of Texas and chairman emeritus of the Texas Coalition of Veterans Organizations.

David Shanler '68 '76 is happy to report that his granddaughter, Giselle Middleton, is now a Wildcat. Giselle, who appeared in the summer 2013 issue of Arizona Alumni at the age of 8, proudly sporting her Arizona gear, is now majoring in pharmaceutical sciences. She is still a devoted fan of Wildcats basketball. David could not have hoped for more.

1970s

Richard Martindell '70 published "Game of Drones," sharing his experiences flying the MQ-9 Reaper, a remotely piloted vehicle drone, as a civilian contract pilot and contrasting it with his time flying F-4s and F-15s in the Air Force. The book provides readers with a look into his deployments in the Middle East, Africa and Europe, and discusses the post-traumatic stress disorder risks faced by RPV operators.

Barney Popkin '73 published an article for the International Journal of Levant Studies titled "Potential transnational energy, water, and crop management and cooperation in the Levant." The piece concludes that current and future conditions in the Levant hinder successful regional transnational cooperation for modern infrastructure management software.

Carol Hubbard '74 and her Wildcat husband, Ken Kyzer, moved to Cuenca, Ecuador. Carol, a proposal technical editor for John Snow Inc., was featured in a production of Noël Coward's play "Blithe Spirit." While there, she and Ken met fellow Wildcat L. Jay Edenmeyer '01 and his husband, Scott Bear.

Jack McElroy '75 published "Citizen Carl: The Editor Who Cracked Teapot Dome, Shot a Judge and Invented the Parking Meter" (University of New Mexico Press). The biography tells the story of Carl Magee, a Southwestern journalist, entrepreneur and social activist who founded the Albuquerque Tribune and exposed the biggest political scandal of the early 20th century.

Ralph Charlip '77 received a doctor of public administration from Walden University in November 2023.

Stephen Harnden '77 and **Michael Gombrich '12** were named in Forbes' list of Best-in-State Wealth Advisors, recognizing financial advisers who have demonstrated high levels of ethical standards, professionalism and success in the industry.

1980s

Marla Stafford '81 received the Kim Rotzoll Award for Advertising Ethics and Social Responsibility from the American Academy of Advertising in March 2024. Elected as an academy fellow in 2021, Marla also has received the Ivan L. Preston Outstanding Contribution to Research Award.

Silviana Wood '83, a bilingual writer, actor, playwright, director and teacher, recently published her novel "La Quinta Soledad" (Aztlan Libre Press).

David Wickerham '84 is one of 12 people left in the world who can play the Wurlitzer, a theater organ known for its historic use in movie theaters during silent films.

Rebecca Thompson '85 '24, a former U of A soccer player, recently gave a TEDx talk on biophilic art and enhancing individual health. She also is a Norton School council member.

Heather Gottlich '87 was named in the 2024 Forbes list of Top Women Wealth Advisors Best-in-State and in 2024 Forbes' list of Best-in-State Wealth Management Teams as a member of the HARPG Wealth Management Group. Heather has over 25 years of experience, initially at Bear Stearns, then with UBS Financial Services in 2008 before joining Merrill Lynch Wealth Management in 2016.

David Buseck '87 published "Paris: City of Cultures, Walk & Roll with Fresh Eyes," available on Amazon. The book features accessible walking tours of Paris, complete with maps and directions. Diagnosed with ALS in 2019, David developed the

book based on tours he led with his wife and students during the five summers of teaching college classes there. Twenty percent of the book's proceeds will benefit the ALS Network.

Eric J. Halvorson '88, a third-generation Wildcat, retired at age 50 after a successful career in sales and banking. Eric now resides in Phoenix. His nephew, Colin Halvorson, will be a junior this fall in U of A's civil engineering program.

Judy Bernas '88 was appointed chair of the Fiesta Bowl board of directors for the 2024-25 and 2025-26 seasons. Judy, a recipient of the 40 under 40 award from Inside Tucson Business and the Phoenix Business Journal, served at the University of Arizona for 24 years and played a key role in launching the downtown Phoenix medical school. She currently is the senior associate dean and chief strategy and communication officer for the Burnett School of Medicine at Texas Christian University.

Julie Kessler '88, a member of Alpha Epsilon Phi sorority, recently launched Oakley's Oath, a nonprofit named after her late dog. The organization raises awareness about pet and child safety during home construction projects.

Dharshi Bopegedera '89 received the 2024-25 ACS-CES Award for Incorporation of Sustainability into Chemistry Education. Dharshi received the award, sponsored by the American Chemical Society's Committee on Environment and Sustainability, in recognition of her project, "Incorporating Green Chemistry, Sustainability, and Climate Change Themes into the First-Year Chemistry Curriculum and Outreach Activities."

1990s

Phoebe Chalk-Wadsworth '90 is president and CEO of Chalk Consulting LLC, specializing in nonprofit and higher education fundraising and engagement consulting. Previously, Phoebe enjoyed a 31-year career at the University of Arizona.

Stanley Silver '91 is a highly sought-after artist with paintings in NFL, MLB and NBA stadiums and arenas, including Lambeau Field, Levi's Stadium and Petco Park. He has been commissioned to create pieces for Hall of Famers and prominent figures in the entertainment industry. Learn more about his work at stanleysilver.com.

David Winner '91 recently published "Master Lovers" (Outpost 19), a memoir-biography hybrid about his aunt, Dorle Soria, founder of Angel Records. The book delves into the family secrets David discovered while sorting through Dorle's apartment after her passing.

Roger S. Gobin '94 '96 is vice president of geotechnical and tunneling at WSP in central Florida. Roger also serves as a Construction Training & Qualification Program instructor and has conducted over 75 training sessions. Since graduating, he has accumulated over 29 years of engineering consulting and construction experience. His children, Anna and Devin Gobin, are practicing attorneys in Florida.

David Dyer '99 has recently become an associate at Verrill Dana LLP's Intellectual Property Group, based in the firm's Portland, Maine, office. Before joining Verrill, David gained valuable experience as a patent attorney at a prominent IP boutique law firm in Minnesota and a general practice firm in Maine.

2000s

Jessica Holton '00 received the University of Arizona's College of Agriculture, Life and Environmental Sciences' 2024 Professional Achievement Award. She is a licensed clinical social worker and licensed clinical addictions specialist.

Dara Henry '01 is set to release her debut picture book "Hanukkah Pajamakkahs" (Sourcebooks Kids) Sept. 3, 2024.

Ramey Peru '03, a former punter on the Arizona football team, joined the Fiesta Bowl board of directors after serving as a Yellow Jacket committee member. Ramey is a senior vice president with the AZ LandSource Team at Colliers and has extensive experience in the commercial real estate industry.

Richard Miller '06 was named the Arts Volunteer of the Year in 2023 by Georgia Lawyers for the Arts, a nonprofit facilitating pro bono legal assistance for artists and arts organizations. As the managing partner of Ballard Spahr's Atlanta office, Richard led a team that successfully assisted a music producer in breaking free from an oppressive recording contract.

Katherine Siegwarth '09 '11 is the executive director of FotoFocus, an arts nonprofit focused on photography and lens-based art. Her career began with an internship and graduate student work at Arizona's Center for Creative Photography. At FotoFocus, she collaborates with fellow Wildcat **Carissa Barnard '95**, the director of curatorial strategy. Katherine oversees the FotoFocus Biennial, the largest event of its kind in the U.S., and is leading the major project of building a new FotoFocus Center to open in 2025. The upcoming 2024 Biennial will feature the exhibition "Discovering Ansel Adams" organized by CCP's Chief Curator **Rebecca Senf '94**.

2010s

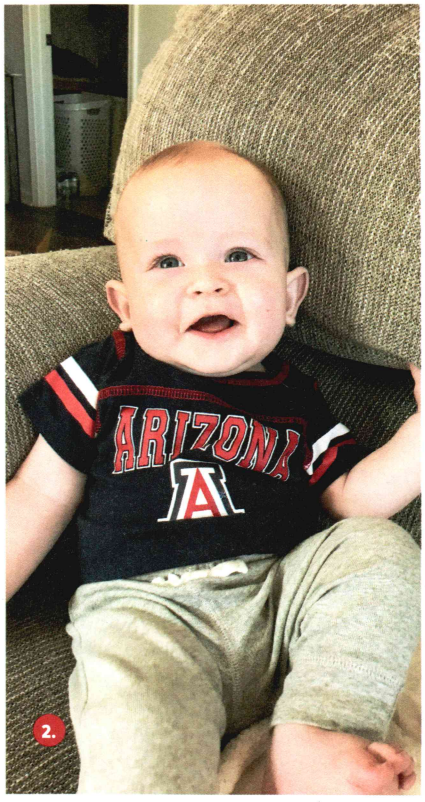
Jason Zeitler '11 published his debut novel, "The Half-Caste," which has been selected as a finalist in the Best New Voice category of the Independent Book Publishers Association's 2024 Benjamin Franklin Awards.

Paris Scobie '18 hosts the podcast "Live Well Bipolar." She also authored the best-selling memoir "Crooked Illness: Lessons from Inside & Outside Hospital Walls." Diagnosed with bipolar 1 disorder at age 19, Paris now speaks professionally for the National Alliance on Mental Illness and at schools. Through her work, Paris has advocated for mental health awareness and shares with others to recognize the value of their stories.

2020s

Zachary Gardner '21 received his juris doctor from the University of Denver Sturm College of Law in May.

WEDDINGS AND FAMILIES



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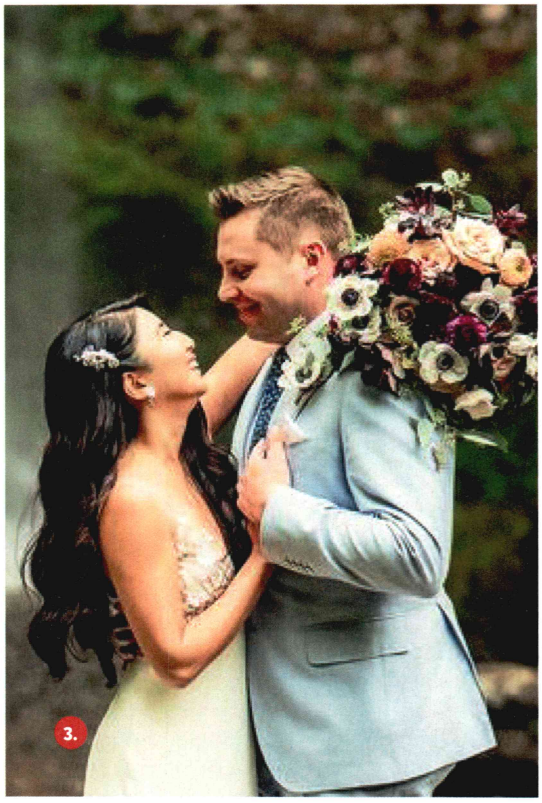
3.

1. **Kenneth Wong '71 '73** and **Martha Wong '71 '75** celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary June 22, 2024. Kenneth was the first Chinese American from Arizona to be appointed as a special agent for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He served in the San Francisco Division for 27 years. Martha was the first Asian American woman to graduate from Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law and the first admitted to the Arizona Bar Association. She served as a general attorney for the former U.S. Customs, retiring in 2015 as the assistant chief counsel for U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Their sons, **Garret Wong '02** and **Matt Wong '06**, also became Wildcats.

2. **Corinne Gold '06** and Andreas Gold welcomed Evangelos Nov. 21, 2023. He will be cheering on his favorite team, the Wildcats, continuing the family tradition.

3. **Eddie Maynard '14** and Irene Diep were married in Portland, Oregon, Sept. 17, 2023, at Bridal Veil Lakes.

FAREWELL, DEAR FRIENDS | Honoring Wildcats who have passed away

Mary C. Lundquist '44
Mary Alice B. Cook '50
Ivan G. Rice '50
Marvin G. Burns '51
James G. Hess '51
Tommie E. Jewell '52
Manuel L. Leon '52
Kathryn E. Pile '53
John E. Warneke '54 '58
Earl A. Zarbin '54
Joseph M. Litzelfelner '56
Patrick J. Reidy '56
Terry P. Anderson '57
Richard E. Joachim '57
Walter J. Van Deren '57
Patricia D. Johnson '58
James R. McNelly '58
Paul F. Muscenti '58
Nita C. Alspach '59
James W. Blair '59
Carol J. Bishop '60
Jesus P. Cirinox '60
Andrew B. Kelly '60
Marilyn A. Kent '60
William J. Polson '60
Linn A. Wallace '60 '67
George B. Broome '61
Emanuel N. Kyriannis '61
Ronald A. Pedderson '61'65
David E. Washburn '61 '62 '70
Thomas B. Burns '62
Carolyn K. Filley '62
Walter D. Armer '64
Julieta S. Barber '64
Martha J. Patz '64'69
Frank Petroni '64
William C. Pisano '64
Edward P. Gattix '65
Gordon V. Johnson '65
J. Michael Hennigan '66 '70
William R. Fishburn '67
Gerald L. Jones '67
James H. McCutchan '68
Jeane M. Turner '68
William D. Eastman '69
Erwin F. Nied '69
Albert M. Tucker '69
Barry R. Bainton '70 '79
Alfred B. Montes '70 '77
Wesley W. Roach '70
David B. Ross '70
William A. Merrill '71
Ruthanne H. Strong '71 '76
Laura S. Weiss '71
Elizabeth P. Jenkins '72
Olivia J. Lambright '73
Gerald D. Palsson '73
Richard L. Harmon '75
Gail K. Ingersoll '75
Karen A. White '75 '81
Elizabeth A. Rodzen-Taylor '76
Sally N. Clark '77
Jane M. Sedlmayr '77
Stephanie A. Wiggins '77
Iliana L. Blay '78
David W. Price '78
Sidney B. Harper '79
Allen J. Malmquist '79
Elmira I. Reavis '79
Daniel L. Tolley '79
Eleanor B. Bouley '80
Horton E. Newsom '82
Alice P. Crandall '83
James J. Croneberger '83
John V. Fulginiti '83 '95
Nancy A. Ingersoll '83 '88
Donna J. Main '85
Elias O. Tembe '85 '86
R. Tad Heydenfeldt '86
Burr Munsell '86
Barbara A. Escobar '87
Scott P. Glener '87
Dominic B. Svorinic '87
Kathryn T. Lynch '88
Amy S. Bhola '89
Lori C. Hawkins '89
Jon L. Hayes '90
John N. Raisler '89
Heath J. Bray '93
Cathleen A. O'Connor '93
Enedina S. Esquivel '94
Rebel D. Poole '94
Antonia Mireles '96
Alexander C. Sinclair '96
Susan K. Carroll '99
Terra K. Koehler '00
Jessica J. Johnson '10
Sean C. Viator '13
Joseph M. Bickley '17 '18 '24
Diego A. Zell '23

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Learn more and plan your visit at alumni.arizona.edu/homecoming

Naphtali Yaakov Curry as Donkey

BRIGHT LIGHTS

Alum Naphtali Yaakov Curry takes the stage. By Rhaya Truman | Cody York photos

In March, Naphtali Yaakov Curry '20 made his return to Tucson playing the lead role of Donkey in the national touring production of "Shrek the Musical." The School of Theatre, Film & Television alum, who graduated during the pandemic, had a tough time finding roles at first but was able to land gigs at Chicago theaters while working at a Whole Foods Market to get by. He patiently waited for the opportunity that would finally take him to the next level, and although his journey took a few more turns than expected, he says he landed right where he belonged.

Q: After you graduated, how did some of your first projects influence your growth as a performer?

A: Well, I graduated in 2020, so for the first two years I wasn't acting. I was working at Whole Foods and auditioning for what I could. There was a slim number of projects, and since I was new, it was hard to book gigs. In 2022, I booked my first gig in the production of "Rent." I was in the ensemble and the understudy of Betty. Then I booked my next job in March in a new show called "The Real Housewives of Motown" at a black ensemble theater in Chicago. Through connections I made there, I landed my next job in a production of "Twelfth Night" at Chicago Shakespeare Theater. It was exciting, because that was the biggest theater I had worked at, and I had a moment where I said to myself "OK, things are happening, and I am moving up." Then I booked "Shrek"!

Q: As an alum, how did your experience and training at U of A help you in your career?

A: The preparation for long hours: Being in the theater department, my life was in that building, so I was doing my academics throughout the day, then my theater classes and then at the end of the day I would be in rehearsals from 5-10 [p.m.]. Being able to balance the social life [and] work life in college is similar to how I balance my life and career now. So, it has been easy to adjust since graduating.

Q: What was your mindset while working at Whole Foods and waiting for your acting career to jump-start?

A: It was pretty rough. Originally, I was supposed to move straight to New York after graduating, but after COVID I decided to go back home to Chicago. When I first moved back home, working at Whole Foods was paying the bills, and I started to get comfortable — but that wasn't what I wanted. I don't want to say I was miserable, but I wasn't happy. Doing my theater work helped, but it still wasn't fulfilling. Then, when I booked Chicago Shakespeare, I quit [Whole Foods] and was able to say I was a full-time actor, because right after that I left for tour.

Q: What challenges did you experience preparing for "Shrek," and how did you overcome them?

A; The main challenge would probably be stamina. Donkey is so energetic throughout the whole show, and sometimes, as an actor, if the character is high energy you don't really realize how much energy you are putting in on stage. Another challenge is keeping my performance fresh, because as an actor, when you do things over and over, it can start to feel stale. I wanted to make sure that didn't happen in this role, because it really shows on stage. Due to that, finding new pieces of Donkey every time I get on stage is something that I am continuously working on.

Q: The theater world is undeniably a hard space to break into. What is one piece of advice for recent alumni hoping to land a dream role?

A: It's OK to have a plan, but it is also OK to continue to adjust your plan. A lot of times in theater we say "this is what I want" in a specific order. Then we have things like the pandemic or just any unpredictable circumstances that can derail your whole plan. We can't determine how our life is going to go or what is going to happen. We just have to continue to take the hits and adjust.

Q: After the "Shrek" tour is over, what do you hope is next for you?

A: I just want to keep going up, whether it's the type of show, the pay, etc. I don't know where I am going to be after this. Whether that be going back to Chicago, making the move to New York, signing on to another tour — I just want to make sure my next project is adding on to what I want my resume to look like. My only hope is to keep moving and going forward. ◆

Photo: Chris Richards

THE GOOD FIGHT

A new mural honors alumna and civil rights activist Laura Banks-Reed. By Kim Stoll

A new mural, housed in the lobby of the YWCA on Tucson's west side, has immortalized the life's work of alumna Laura Banks-Reed '43 '66 '70 '81. Banks-Reed was a native Tucsonan and civil rights activist who helped change public education in southern Arizona.

The mural was commissioned by the Tucson YWCA, which will create the Dr. Laura Banks-Reed Center for Gender and Racial Equity program in her honor. It was designed and created by alumna Jessica Gonzales '12, a local muralist awarded the Social Justice in the Arts Award by the YWCA for her work on the mural.

Gonzales says incorporating aspects of Banks-Reed's life work as an activist and advocate for people of color and women into the mural was her main inspiration.

Jennifer O'Neill, a YWCA board member, says she believes the mural will help future generations pick up where others have left off. ◆

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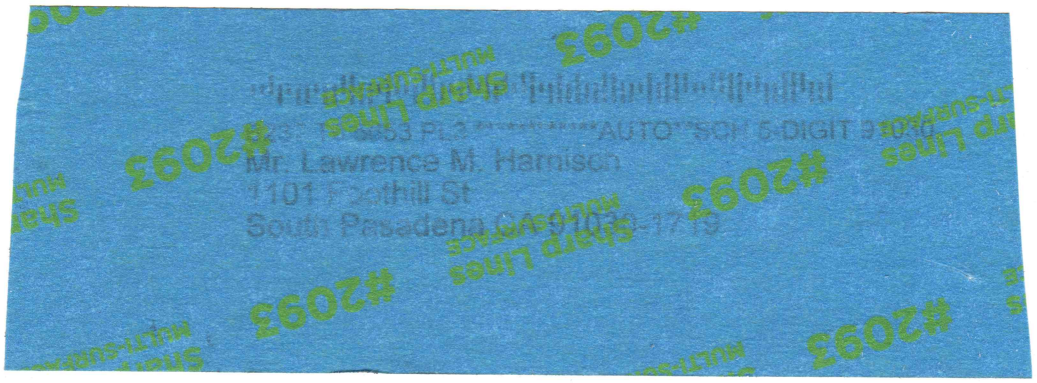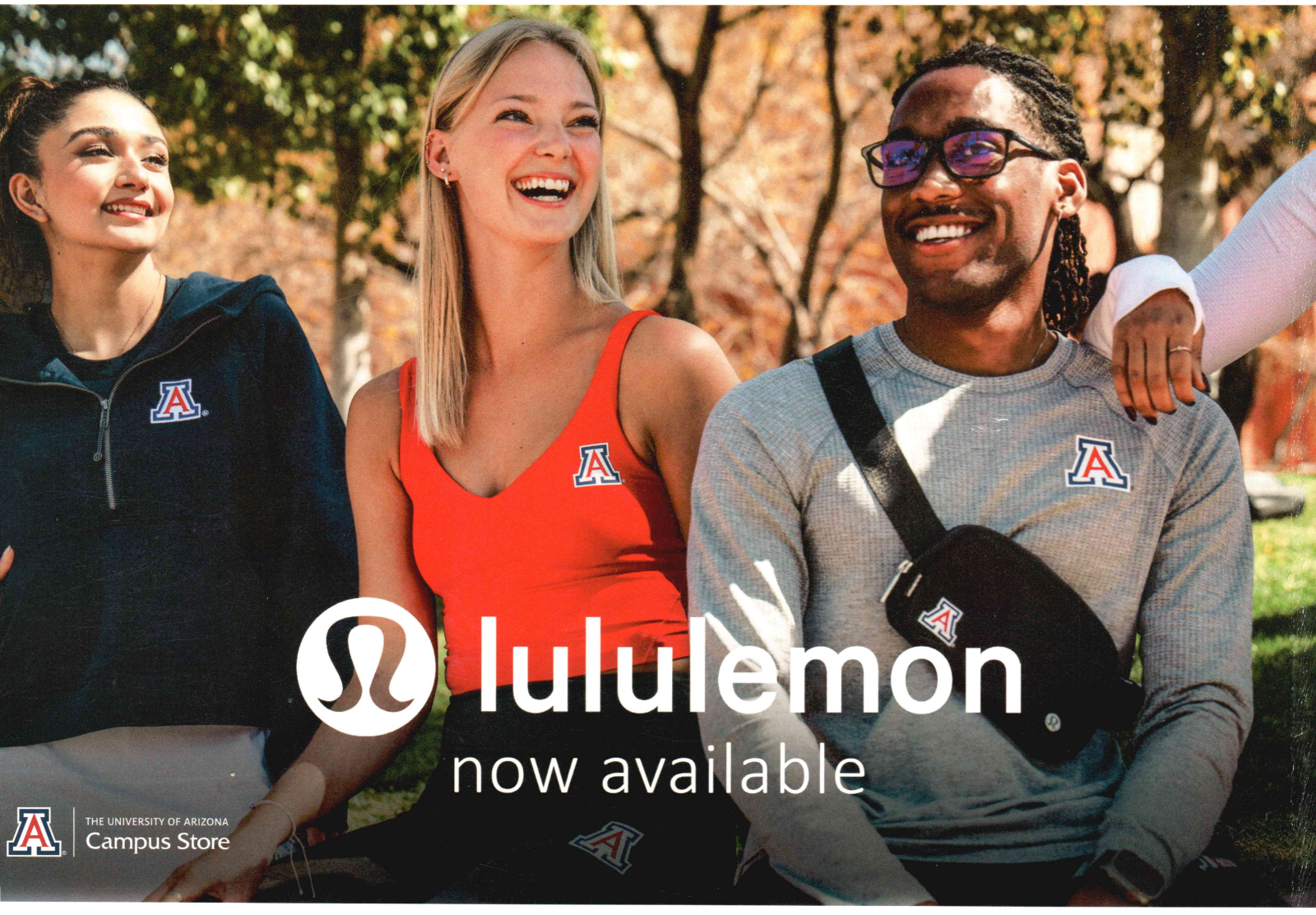
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